

OSWESTRY & BORDER CHRONICLE



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60P WHERE SOLD

TURBINE CONVOYS TO HIT THE A483

Report by Sally Williams

MASSIVE articulated lorries carrying wind turbines that will be 383-feet-high will be transported through towns this summer causing delays for motorists.

Wales Transport Minister Edwina Hart has confirmed that the Tirgwynt Wind Farm, in between Cefn Coch and Carno in Mid Wales, will go ahead this August.

Mrs Hart said turbine traffic will travel along the busy A483 from Oswestry, passing through central Welshpool towards Castle Caereinion and along the B4385 through Cefn Coch to Tirgwynt. The convoy is expected to travel at an average speed of 30 mph on A-class roads and 20 mph on other roads.

It will consist of two or three Abnormal Indivisible Load (AIL) vehicles, escorted by police vehicles, police outriders, a traffic management team and a dedicated convoy support service.

Sara Powell-Davies, communications manager for RenewableUK Cymru, said a strategic Traffic Management Plan (sTMP) for Mid Wales Wind Farms had been developed

to manage the delivery of turbine components from Ellesmere Port to the Strategic Search Areas (SSA) in Mid Wales, passing through Wrexham, Chester, Oswestry, Newtown and Welshpool.

She said AIL delivery vehicles will consist of an articulated vehicle and extendable trailer designed for the transportation of wind turbines with a blade length of approximately 45 metres and tower section width of 4.5 metres.

"The convoy will be accompanied by a police escort at all times to ensure the safety of other road users and the free flow of traffic," she said.

She said information would be widely published to ensure that local residents and other road users are aware of turbine deliveries up to four weeks in advance.

She said: "Tirgwynt Wind Farm is located over land called Mynydd yr Hendre and Pistyll Du. Planning permission was granted in October 2013. There will be 12 turbines with an installed capacity of up to 24.6MW.

"It is anticipated that the turbines will be installed and ready to produce power by December 2016.

"The wind farm was originally developed by West Coast Energy but it is now being run by Belltown Power Limited.

"It will use the Ellesmere Port to Welshpool route.

"However, they are not shipping to Ellesmere Port but will be joining the A483 near Chester and will go as far as the A458 and B4385 junction about four miles west of Welshpool."



Wind turbines on the move

Runners hop to it to raise cash at fundraiser



Chloe Andrew and Annie Thomas, from Welshpool, at the Bunny Run in Oswestry on Sunday. Picture: Jamie Ricketts.

DOZENS of runners hopped into Oswestry to take part in the town's inaugural bunny run.

Two best friends put together the fancy dress run to help with their fundraising for this year's London Marathon.

James Manford and Curtis Langley held the run around Shelf Bank on Sunday, not only to boost the charity coffers but because the town does not have a regular run of its own.

About 63 people took part, clad in bunny ears, raising more than £700 for two chosen charities.

James, from Gobowen who works for an American Finance Company, said the pair were really pleased with how the day went.

"This is one of a number of events we've organised but it is definitely the biggest. We

wanted to do something that would, first of all, be fun, something that would get people outside doing something sporty and that would bring the community together.

"Also there isn't really a regular run in the town."

James says he hopes the pair will be able to attract other people to help them run the event in future and make it a more regular event. The marathon will be Curtis' third, which he will be taking on for Hope House and needs to raise about £2,500 for charity.

He is fundraising for the charity in memory of his friend's son baby Zackery.

Curtis, who works as a physiotherapist assistant at Oswestry hospital and lives in St Martins, said: "She received a lot of help and

counselling from Hope House afterwards and I don't think people know enough about the other work they do.

"People think of it as a hospice, which it is but it does a lot more for people with counselling and support, they help so many people but I don't think other people know that much about it."

First time marathon runner James will be taking on the challenge for the bone cancer unit at Oswestry's orthopaedic hospital, after a number of generations of his family were affected by the illness. He needs to raise about £1,500.

To sponsor James visit www.justgiving.com/marathon-manford or to sponsor Curtis visit www.justgiving.com/Curtis-Langley2

COURT

Fraudster jailed for stealing from his grandparents

A GAMBLING addict stole nearly £17,000 from his grandparents to feed his habit, court heard.

Graham Thomas raided the bank account of Moira and William Benyon and took nearly half of their life savings between February and July last year after finding their card and PIN in his grandmother's bag.

He was jailed for 18 months by Judge Robin Onions at Shrewsbury Crown Court on Tuesday after pleading guilty to two offences of fraud.

The court heard Thomas, 30, had lived with his grandparents in Porth-y-Waen, Oswestry, for nearly 10 years.

Miss Samantha Powis, prosecuting, said the defendant's mother, Olwyn Sides, discovered money was missing from her parent's account. There were transactions for £4,000, £6,000 and £4,000.

He also took £2,524 by withdrawing cash from ATMs between February and March last year. In total £16,526.98 was taken, Miss Powis told the court.

Mr Andrew Holland, for Thomas, said his client was fully aware of the effect the offending had on his family.

"He has a gambling habit and was moving from job to job," Mr Holland said.

A future proceeds of crime hearing will determine if he has to repay any of the money to his grandparents.



Graham Thomas

ROADS

40mph speed limits on way at hotspots

PLANS are in the pipeline to introduce new 40mph speed limits at two hotspots near Oswestry where there have been a number of near misses.

The speed limits are being proposed on the B5069 St Martins Road and also Moors Lane at St Martins by Shropshire Council, following calls from Councillor Steve Davenport.

Councillor Davenport said: "Those coming down from Moors Lane see quite a few near misses. I have been trying to get those areas down to 30mph but I'm very happy to get them down to 40. I will then look to get them down to 30mph."

INSIDE

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Report by Naomi Penrose

A COUNCILLOR for the Oswestry area is encouraging young people to attend meetings of a committee which looks closely at the services the council provides for them.

Councillor Joyce Barrow, who represents the St Oswald division on the unitary authority, said Shropshire Council's young people's scrutiny committee is made up of councillors from all parties, and meets every six weeks or so.

At the committee's meetings, councillors receive reports, presentations and information about services, and have the chance to ask questions.

The meetings are open to the public, and the committee chairman is inviting children and young people to get involved by coming along to a future meeting, or by suggesting a topic that they would like to be discussed.

And to make it easier for children to attend, the committee is also hoping to hold a future meeting at one of the county's schools. Over the past year, the committee has considered a wide range of subjects, from child sexual exploitation to the provision of youth services and provision of post-16 education.

Councillor Barrow, chairman of the committee, said: "Our committee is all about the county's children and young people and about what the council does to help and support them. So, it would be brilliant to see more youngsters at our meetings, or to find out what they would like us to hear and talk about."

"We're hoping to hold a future meeting at a school, so that children can come and see us and see the work of the committee for themselves."

"We're currently developing the list of subjects that we plan to consider at our meetings in the coming year, and I ask people of all ages to get in contact if they have anything that they would like us to look at or discuss."

To find out more about the young people's scrutiny committee, or to put forward suggestions for subjects to be discussed, email joyce.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk.

The next meeting of the committee is on May 25 at Shirehall in Shrewsbury, starting at 10am.

Artist reveals sculpture of a king



Sculptor Tim Turner, of Oswestry, with his bronze bust of Orelle-Antoine, at Castle Fine Arts Foundry, Llanrhedraadr

AN artist's sculpture of an adventurer who became the king of Patagonia will take up permanent residence in a French town.

Tim Turner, 50, from Oswestry, had been commissioned to create a bust of Orelle Antoine de Tounens, a Frenchman who assumed the title of King of Araucania and Patagonia in the 1860s.

Mr Turner, an artist who has studied print making at the Royal College of Art, and painting at Loughborough University, said the work will be unveiled in the French town of Tourtoirac later this year.

The bust has been made by Castle Fine Arts Foundry in Llanrhedraadr, and Mr Turner said he was delighted with the re-

sult. He said: "I was very pleased with the way it turned out."

Mr Turner said he would be looking forward to seeing his work in place following the unveiling.

It will be the first time his work has been put on permanent display as a public piece of art.

He said: "This is the first sort of public sculpture commission I have done. I have had works featured in various galleries and on the BBC, in the back drops for various dramas but this is the first time I have had a sculpture commissioned to be unveiled in a public place so I am pretty excited."

Mr Turner worked to create the bust

from photos of an earlier bust produced by a French artist in the 19th century.

The sculpture is expected to be unveiled by Tourtoirac's Lord Mayor on June 25.

The project to produce the sculpture has been organised in preparation for the bicentenary of the Orelle Antoine de Tounens' birth.

It is disputed whether the Frenchman, also a lawyer, was a self-proclaimed king or was elected in a national assembly by more than 3,000 indigenous Mapuche delegates.

The Mapuche are a group of indigenous inhabitants of south-central Chile and south western Argentina, including parts of present-day Patagonia.

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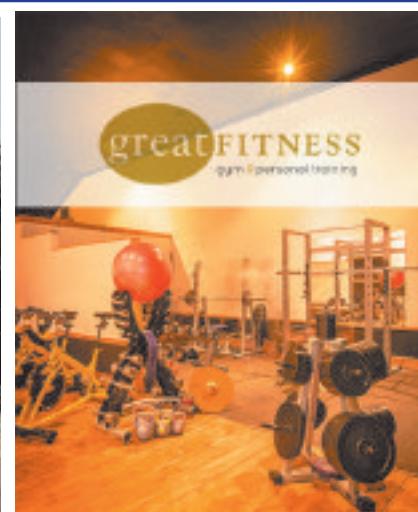
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Railway to hold spring steam event

AN attraction near the Shropshire border will be holding a spring event this weekend.

The Llangollen Railway's Spring Steam Gala will take place from Friday to Sunday.

Headlining the event are two very special guests: 4-6-0 No. 7820 'Dinmore Manor' and Small Prairie class 2-6-2T No. 4566.

Visitors can expect to see double headers, express workings and an intensive timetable recalling the sights and sounds of the Cambrian routes in the 1950s and 60s.

The route of the Llangollen Railway follows a 10-mile stretch of the former cross-country Ruabon to Barmouth line, which was once busy carrying holiday makers from the North West, Manchester and Cheshire to the Cambrian Coast resorts (including Pwllheli, Porthmadog and Barmouth). Dedicated excursion trains would have been timetabled in between the local stopping trains, providing a wide variety of motive power and rolling stock along the predominantly single-track route.

Over the winter period, a large amount of work has been going on to manage the vegetation growing along the lineside. This is a regular but often 'behind the scenes' part of railway operations and enables the travelling public to see the superb countryside.

False ID trader is fined £1,000

A CAR dealer who created a false Facebook identity that he used to sell vehicles has been fined £1,000.

Paul Kevin Williams of Weston Rhyn, who trades from the Williams of Chirk site, pleaded guilty to two offences under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations when he appeared before Wrexham Magistrates Court.

The court was told that Williams had set up a Facebook account in the name of Dave Summer and used this to sell vehicles on a Car Sales Facebook page. Mr Williams would arrange to meet sellers away from his normal trading premises in Chirk and when meeting the customers made no attempt to reveal his true identity or to disclose his status as a car trader. Magistrates were told this was a deliberate act to avoid any obligations he had as a trader.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Historic church is up for auction

AN historic church dating back to 1865 and a pony paddock will be sold at a public auction next month.

Melverley Methodist Church, near Oswestry, which has a guide price of £15,000 to £20,000, is described by Allen Gittins, director at auctioneers Halls', as 'an attractive and interesting building'.

The former church will go under the hammer as part of a 15 lot property auction at Halls' Shrewsbury headquarters on April 29.

Further properties up for auction include a pony paddock in the hamlet of Crickmerry, near Market Drayton, going for £5,000 to £7,000, and pasture land at Welshampton, near Ellesmere, with a guide price of £85,000 to £95,000 for 10 acres, £40,000 to £50,000 for 3.9 acres, and £30,000 to £40,000 for three acres.

Vacancy pops up on parish council

A VACANCY has opened up on a parish council after one of its councillors stepped down.

Selattyn and Gobowen Parish Council is looking for candidates following the resignation of councillor Sara Heap.

Interested parties are asked to apply through the parish clerk before the April 29 deadline.

All applicant's must have either worked or lived within a three-mile radius of the parish, or their name must appear on the parish's current register of electors.

To apply write to The Parish Clerk, Amy Gregory, Hawthorn Cottage, Porthywaen, Oswestry, SY10 8LX or email parishclerksg@gmail.com

Hillfort group meeting invite

CAMPAIGNERS fighting a long-running battle to protect the land surrounding an ancient hillfort will hold a public meeting this weekend.

The Hands Off Old Oswestry Hillfort group are wanting to attract new members and will soon be launching an online registration page on their official website. For a number of years the group has strongly fought against the building of new homes near the Iron Age hillfort.

The meeting is taking place this Saturday between 2pm and 4pm.

Jerry and Clare to hang up horseshoes



Jerry and Claire have enjoyed a bit of a spruce-up ahead of their farewell tour

A PAIR of much-loved shire horses that are preparing to hang up their horseshoes are on a "farewell tour" of National Trust properties in an effort to raise £25,000 towards paying for their replacements.

The pair, Jerry and Claire, are collecting donations on their travels as part of a fundraising initiative for two new and younger shires to take over their "heavy duties" at Erddig's 1,200-acre estate near Wrexham.

As part of their tour which kicked off at Erddig, they have visited Penrhyn Castle Llandegai, Bangor, and Plas Newydd Country House and

Gardens, Llanfairpwll. They are due to visit and Chirk Castle near Oswestry and Powis Castle near Welshpool on Saturday. This is the first time Jerry and Claire, who have been at Erddig for more than 10 years, have left the estate and as part of their holiday preparations they had their hair plaited, teeth polished and hooves shod.

The hard-working shires – aged 19 (66 in horse years) and 15 (56 in horse years) – have distinct personalities and are surely to be spoilt as they say their goodbyes to the public they have served for so long.

Medina Dicks, coachman at Erd-

dig, said: "They might be retiring but they are certainly not shy."

"Jerry and Claire love meeting new people, they have taken hundreds of visitors on carriage rides over the last 12 years so it is time their hard work was rewarded with a trip of their own before they retire."

In his working days Jerry would pull logs and take carriage rides around the estate.

Not shy to publicity, he has made a number of appearances at festivals and shire shows.

Claire joined Jerry at Erddig in 2008.

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Action plan will tackle shortcomings at hospital

Report by Naomi Penrose

PROGRESS is being made to tackle problems with hygiene standards at Shropshire's orthopaedic hospital, health chiefs have said.

Officials at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital said new measures had been drawn up to address concerns raised in a report by the Care Quality Commission.

Site visits have been made by representatives of Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch Shropshire to measure progress being made.

An action plan was presented to members of the hospital board. Measures include training 80 "hand hygiene champions" and commissioning an external review of paediatric services.

New A&E 'is several years away'

IT will take six years to create a new single A&E department for Shropshire, it has been revealed.

A decision on the future of emergency care won't be made until June 2017.

And then the need for building work means any new service won't be ready until between 2021 and 2023.

Future Fit is currently carrying out a review of acute hospital services in Shrewsbury and Telford and Wrekin.

The purpose of the review is to determine where best to place hospital services while ensuring the future of Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals Trust, which faces a growing financial crisis.

It has been revealed that if it was decided the county's only emergency department was to be at Telford's Princess Royal Hospital, it would take three years and six months to complete necessary building work. If the decision goes to Royal Shrewsbury Hospital it will take five years and nine months before the new unit is opened.

The trust has asked London-based AHR Architects to start drawing up plans for a single A&E.

A preferred option for the location of a new single A&E unit for Shropshire was due to be announced by Future Fit last October, but has been hit by severe delays.

A public consultation will now be launched on December 1, ending on March 12 next year.

A final decision is then scheduled to be made on June 30, 2017.

The CQC report said improvements were required at the hospital in learning and feedback from incidents, inconsistent compliance with hand hygiene standards, and in out-of-hours paediatric medical cover.

Privacy and dignity on the high dependency unit was also highlighted, which at the time, hospital bosses said will be addressed by the opening later this year of a new £15.1 million ward and theatre development, which includes a new state-of-the-art HDU facility.

The report rated the trust as "good" for the quality of care it gives to its patients, but overall the hospital was branded as requiring improvement.

Bev Tabernacle, director of nursing at the hospital, said: "We were delighted that the quality of care our teams deliver was recognised by the report, but we also acknowledged that there are a number of areas where we need to make changes."

"We are working closely with partners including Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch Shropshire, who are making regular site visits to assess the progress we are making against the plan."

She also said good progress has already been made in a number of areas highlighted in the plan – including those in relation to infection control, and other key areas where work is under way include in paediatric services and with regards to improving the patient experience in some areas of the hospital.

"Our infection control record is strong but the CQC report did highlight a specific issue with regards to hand hygiene," said Mrs Tabernacle. "This is something we have to get right in order to give our patients confidence that their care is safe."

The hospital is also implementing "more robust audits" to ensure compliance with policies and has reinstated face-to-face training in doctors' induction programmes.

Award recognises care work



Dr Tracey Willis receives the award from Robert Meadowcroft

OSWESTRY Orthopaedic Hospital has been named one of just 10 neuromuscular Centres of Excellence in Britain.

The hospital received the award from the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK.

Families who benefit from the work at the hospital added their praise to that of the charity.

Robert Meadowcroft, chief executive of Muscular Dystrophy UK, said the hospital had met strict criteria and praised it for developments over the last three years and its clinics which provide all round care of patients from joints and orthopaedics, cardio and respiratory treatments to psychological support and outreach work.

Dr Tracey Willis, consultant paediatric

neurologist at the hospital, said it had been involved in neuromuscular care for 30 to 40 years.

"Our patients are lifelong patients and they and their families let us into their lives," she said.

Lisa Thomas, from Morda, only recently had the diagnosis that her sons – four-year-old William and seven-year-old Jack – had muscular dystrophy.

She said the news came out of the blue when William was being assessed for development problems.

She said: "William was diagnosed first and then they carried out tests on Jack."

"The centre is excellent and has helped us to deal with the diagnosis."

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Couple raise nearly £4,000 for kidney charity funds

Report by Naomi Penrose

A COUPLE have raised almost £4,000 to thank the charity which supported them after a wife saved her husband's life by donating one of her kidneys.

Just over six months after Nicola Hill donated one of her kidneys to her husband Adrian, the couple are currently enjoying being fighting fit and getting their lives getting back to normal.

Nicola, 45, who returned to work in January, said 2016 has got off to a good start for them. She said: "It feels good to say life is getting back to normal for us, and Ade's doing well, he's starting to get his life back on track."

"The last 18 months has been such a journey, and we're just overwhelmed by the amazing support we've had from all our friends and family during this time, and of course it feels wonderful to give something back to the British Kidney Patient Association."

"We've chosen to support them as we want to give back for all the support and help they gave us and we want to help other patients and families."

So far the couple, of Middleton Road in Oswestry, have managed to raise almost £4,000 since November – with £2,100 of that total alone being raised at a recent race night at Oswestry Cricket Club.

The British Kidney Patient Association, founded in 1975 by Elizabeth Ward – the mother of a young kidney patient, helps improve the quality of life for adults and children with kidney disease.

The charity provides information and advice to kidney patients and their families as well as providing more grant aid to help them through difficult financial times than any other UK kidney charity.

Staff at the court have confirmed cases will be heard at Telford only from now on.

Tribunal cases will be held in Shrewsbury until the end of April.

Stephen Scully, solicitor advocate at Lanyon Bowdler, said the closure threatens local justice.

He said: "We have clients in Oswestry and beyond who struggle to get to Shrewsbury as it is and most of them are on low income and benefits."

Mr Scully added: "This move will cause delays in hearings."

"We will find ourselves in a position where more warrants will be issued for no attendance then people will be arrested."

"It's a retrograde step."

The court shake-up will also see Shrewsbury Crown Court moved from its current base at Shirehall into the vacated magistrates' premises nearby in Preston Street.

The decision has been taken by the Ministry of Justice following consultation launched in July last year.

No timescale has yet been put forward for the crown court's move.



Nicola Hill donated one of her kidneys to her husband Ade in August last year

Magistrates court shuts its doors

SHEREWSBURY Magistrates Court has closed its doors for good – leaving Shropshire with only one magistrates court.

The court in Abbey Foregate is one of 65 courts across England and Wales being closed by the Ministry of Justice.

It means that people will be required to travel from north of Oswestry and from the south Shropshire border to Telford Magistrates Court for hearings.

Staff at the court have confirmed cases will be heard at Telford only from now on.

Tribunal cases will be held in Shrewsbury until the end of April.

Stephen Scully, solicitor advocate at Lanyon Bowdler, said the closure threatens local justice.

He said: "We have clients in Oswestry and beyond who struggle to get to Shrewsbury as it is and most of them are on low income and benefits."

Mr Scully added: "This move will cause delays in hearings."

"We will find ourselves in a position where more warrants will be issued for no attendance then people will be arrested."

"It's a retrograde step."

The court shake-up will also see Shrewsbury Crown Court moved from its current base at Shirehall into the vacated magistrates' premises nearby in Preston Street.

The decision has been taken by the Ministry of Justice following consultation launched in July last year.

No timescale has yet been put forward for the crown court's move.

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BREEZE ABOUT TOWN

Today I'm calling on the two Conservative MPs serving the area covered by the Oswestry & Border Chronicle to tell Prime Minister David Cameron just how serious the crisis is in the National Health Service.

The call comes after a first-hand experience last Friday in which I learned just how bad things have become in our hospitals, despite Mr Cameron's assurances that more money is being pumped into the service.

It's blindingly clear that the underfunded health service is being cheated and we are all being conned into believing that Mr Cameron's additional funds will solve all the issues. The Prime Minister knows they will be little more than a sticking plaster on a gaping wound and it's time our MPs Owen Paterson and Glynn Davies spoke up.

My own experience lasted six hours at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. A hospital bursting at the seams with patients, many desperate to start treatment but forced to wait for hours in crowded waiting rooms and corridors.

When a calf scan revealed a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) I was ushered to an 'Ambulatory Care' unit at 215pm only to be warned to be prepared for a long wait as a lack of doctors meant two units had been merged into one. It was 8pm when I left - sent to scour Shrewsbury for badly needed medication because the hospital pharmacy was closed.

The tiny waiting room was stuffed to the rafters with patients with a variety of ailments. But there was one common denominator - they all needed urgent care.

So it was a shock to learn that some had been sat there since 9am waiting to be admitted to overcrowded wards where no beds were available.

My heart went out to the young mother who had just donated a kidney to her child and was clearly struggling with the effects of an infection picked up during the transplant. Her condition was worsening but there was no bed available.

A young lady with a broken leg had a similar DVT to mine. She'd also been at the hospital since 9am and it was gone 7pm before she was allowed to hobble out clutching her discharge papers.

This was just a glimpse of the problems being faced by a skeleton staff. In fact the whole unit was staffed by just one amazing qualified nurse and an assistant. His professionalism and enthusiasm kept everyone calm, though by the time I left he looked completely frazzled.

Government investment must increase quickly. We may still have the best health service in the world but it won't be for much longer unless something is done. Perhaps it's time Mr Cameron spent eight hours in a hospital corridor to see just how bad things have got.



West Mercia Police's first Police and Crime Commissioner Bill Longmore is to stand down



Bill Longmore pictured when he was promoted to a police superintendent



Chief constable David Shaw congratulates Bill Longmore at the election count

WORKING FOR YOU

For the last two months, our media has been dominated by the EU Referendum. It will continue until June 23. But the decision by Tata, the Indian industrial conglomerate to sell off its interests in steel manufacture within the UK has taken over the headlines. Rightly so. The decision cannot have come as a shock though, because it's claimed has been losing £1,000,000 a day at its Port Talbot works. No business can carry on for long with ongoing losses on this scale.

There has been lots of debate about what has been brought about this sorry state of affairs. The main reason is reduction in demand for steel, especially in China. As a consequence, there is a huge amount of spare steelmaking capacity around the world. Inevitably, production greater than demand causes a fall in prices and profits. It's also the case that the UK's decarbonisation policies have meant higher energy prices. This comes as no surprise to some of us, who have warned about 'green taxation' leading to the export of energy-intensive businesses for years.

Nothing is gained about arguing about the past. It's where we go from here that matters. In an ideal world some 'white knight' company will ride out of the shadows to buy Tata Steel as a going concern. It's not going to happen. Tata are a very good company, which has invested billions into the business, and still losing £1,000,000 a day. It's unlikely anyone could do it better. Any new owner will need to restructure what happens at Port Talbot to create a viable business.

Some commissioners have been more successful than others, and that there are still some wrinkles to iron out with the PCC system," he says.

"Despite that though, it seems clear to me that police and crime commissioners have been a success.

"In crude terms, the system costs less and does more," he says, pointing out that despite inflation and the extra responsibilities given to the commissioners, his final year operating costs will be £1.3 million - compared to £1.5 million for the final year of the old police authority.

"That is an overly simplistic view though, and I think the role it plays in bringing the police closer to the communities they serve has been incredibly important and benefits everyone. I am very pleased that the commissioner role will continue for the foreseeable future, although I'm sure it will continue to evolve over time."

Indeed, Home Secretary Theresa May has suggested that in future commissioners could be given responsibilities for other emergency services, although that will obviously be a matter for Mr Longmore's successor.

Money has been one of the big factors during Mr Longmore's term as commissioner. One of the first challenges presented to him on taking up the role was to save more than £20 million over the course of his term. But despite the financial challenges he was able to support Oswestry's new CCTV system during his term in office. His department gave £68,000 to fit 15 new cameras and a bank of flat screen monitors to replace the original system. "Oswestry is an example that the rest of the region will want to follow," Mr Longmore said at the time. "It is a fine example of the police working with the community and I hope we can continue this partnership working as we look at how Oswestry Police Station can develop. We are also getting a lot of other towns asking to come and look at this system in Oswestry."

One of the reasons for the current crisis is a massive over-supply of steel in China. The Chinese are taking an amazing 500,000 jobs out of steel manufacture, but that takes time. There is also much shouting for extra taxes on Chinese imports. The Government knows very well that this is a superficially attractive, but dangerous road to travel. Tit-for-tat import restrictions would undermine world trade and cause long-term damage to British interests.

There are also calls for the British steel industry to be 'nationalised'. This is not going to happen either. I can envisage the Government providing help, including big cash to support restructuring, but not actual ownership by the Government.

We need to do all we can to retain steel making in the UK. I sense that an acceptable deal will emerge over next few weeks. We all hope so.

Time catches up on first policing commissioner

West Mercia's first police and crime commissioner is about to give up the post. MARK ANDREWS reports

BILL Longmore recalls the scene at Shrewsbury Sports Village about 40 months ago.

"I was at the election count in Shrewsbury, anxious to find out how the public had voted in the first ever police and crime commissioner elections," he says.

It is safe to say he pulled off one of the big shocks of the night.

Up against the might of the professional party machines, the retired police superintendent - who had funded his own campaign - found himself elected as West Mercia's first police and crime commissioner, standing on an independent ticket.

He was, in fact, one of 10 independent candidates elected that night.

"I felt so proud to win," he says. "It has been an honour to serve and represent the people of West Mercia."

As indicated by his past tense, Mr Longmore's time at the helm of policing in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire is coming to an end. Mr Longmore had always indicated he only ever intended to serve a single term as commissioner, and when the next election is held in May, the 77-year-old will not be on the list of candidates.

"It's incredible to think how quickly the time has passed," he says, as he presents his end-of-term report, summarising his time as commissioner.

"That's probably the best illustration of just how busy and challenging my role has been, and how much has been packed into a comparatively short period.

"As I prepare to leave office, there are of course things I wish I could have



Bill Longmore takes a look at Oswestry's new CCTV control room

achieved, or projects I wanted to finish, but I've learned that this isn't a world where things conveniently stand still.

"Time catches up with all of us, and we have to entrust our legacy to those following on behind us."

The first elections for police and crime commissioners in 2012 were mired with controversy. The roles had been created by the Coalition government in an effort to make police forces more accountable to the public.

But many in the Labour party were fiercely opposed. In the neighbouring West Midlands force area, the victorious Labour candidate - the late Bob Jones - said he hoped that his post would be made redundant, and there were many who argued that the commissioners were an unnecessary extra expense.

"Turnout in West Mercia was 14.54 per cent - fractionally lower than the national average of 15.1 per cent - leading Labour's former home secretary Charles Clarke to say there was no popular mandate for the new commissioners.

Yet despite these controversies, the role of police and crime commissioner looks to be here to stay, with the Government hoping that now the public has become used to the idea of having an accountable figurehead for policing, the turnout in May will be much higher.

Mr Longmore has fiercely guarded his status as an independent during his term of office, determined that nobody would be able to pin a political label on him. But the one political hot potato he is clear on is that the decision to have elected commissioners was the right one.

"I would be the first to admit that

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Letters

Find out more about the Lisbon Treaty

THE claim made by Michael Gove that Cameron's deal with the European Union is not legally binding certainly rings true.

The European Union has form with any deals made in the EU Council of Ministers and not part of a treaty.

Consider the case of Tony Blair when Prime Minister in 2005.

He gave away around 40 per cent of the UK rebate won by Mrs Thatcher in 1984.

He did this on the solemn understanding that in return the European Union would review and reform the outrageously expensive Common Agricultural Policy which subsidises inefficient European Union

farmers (mainly French and Eastern European). That promise was never fulfilled and the cost to the British taxpayer - £445 each.

By 2014 we had lost £10 billion in rebate.

Leaving aside the fact that Cameron's so-called reforms do nothing to restore democracy and powers back to Parliament, the lesson of history tells us that unless they are in a treaty they can and will be challenged by the European Union court which has full powers over our courts.

We should look instead to the Lisbon Treaty (really the EU constitution).

Cameron gave us a 'cast iron' guarantee that we would have our say on this in a ref-

erendum. Cameron then refused to allow a vote.

The Lisbon Treaty moves more and more powers to the European Union as each year passes.

The referendum is not about Cameron's useless deal. It is about the powers we are losing to the European Union each year under the Lisbon Treaty. Look it up, get informed and then vote to leave since the Lisbon Treaty shows we are on a road to the end of the UK as a sovereign, democratic, independent nation.

JOHN STRETTON
Albrighton

Don't forget about great food served up in our pubs

SPRING is in the air and soon many of us will be getting out in Shropshire's delightful countryside.

When lunchtime comes we may well look for a pleasant pub that serves hot food and good beer in comfortable surroundings, and this is where the current 'fine dining' reviews in the newspapers every week are beginning to pall.

For us ordinary mortals, it's not artistically arranged pieces of food costing something north of 20 quid that we want.

We are looking for a decent plateful of tasty, recognisable grub, for less than a tenner. But that's not to say that any old thing will do – even simple food can be cooked properly.

A mouthful of fish balanced on top of three chips with a smudge of green 'jus' fancifully called a mushy pea reduction doesn't do the job, but a decently cooked fillet of fish in delightfully crispy batter, with a satisfying quantity of nicely browned chips and proper peas, does. I don't want to put posh nose down, it's lovely on special occasions, but it's time we saw a balance. I don't know of anyone who wants to see the pub trade die. A good village pub is a delight to be in, but if the papers concentrate totally on high-end food you'll help to bury many of them.

Traditional pubs are a highly valued element in our countryside. Most of us despair when another one closes, and the survival of those that remain is of paramount importance.

PATRICK WAGNER
Shrewsbury

Don't make vote mistake

WE have Cameron, Hague and others putting out spin to frighten voters into staying in this corrupt EU club.

These two were probably in nappies or primary school when we were a free and profitable society, so what do they know about what's good for the UK?

They certainly know what's good for themselves and their big business buddies.

This is the only chance in a generation that you will have to get rid of the shackles of this ruling empire in Brussels.

Don't mess it up, as you will just give them such powers that your borders will be lost forever.

We have uncontrollable mass immigration which the infrastructure of this island cannot cope with. It's rather strange that this issue has never been mentioned by our David. He knew to call a quick referendum this year because he knows by next the immigration issue would be out of control. He knows he would have been defeated. He is rather smart on that score. So don't let him get away with it. This country did OK outside the EU.

We had a surplus in trade with the rest of the world.

But since being in the EU it's always been a deficit.

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Football fan had business as coal merchant



This photo was loaned by Mrs Christine Hughes of Oswestry. She is the daughter of David Jones, who used to run Oswestry Celtic. He went into business as D E Jones Coal Merchants, better known as Davy Jones the Coal. This is the premises. "This was in Beatrice Street where Morrisons is now situated, near the Tandoori," said Chris. Mr Jones used to support Celtic, along with Arsenal. But his wife used to support Rangers.

How can we trust what we hear on big referendum?

AS we wait for 'that day' when we vote for our future, in or out of the EU, we'll be bombarded with advice.

How can we trust what we see/hear? We all have a chance to vote, but with much of the noise being biased by corporate, political self-interest, how shall we find the best way to go for our future?

I'd love to see a truly independent publication, like 'Which', lay out the facts for us, under headings such as defence, economics and laws, and no comments about pros or cons. Set out in a simple way with space for us to record our ideas on the subjects, so that we can read, discuss and read again reflecting on our own information.

We are to make up our minds and should certainly not be led by politics. Even David Cameron has let his cabinet go their own way. Do we want to rule ourselves and make our own way in the world or continue in a very close relationship with other countries? I voted for the Common Market but that is not what we have now.

B A FLOWERS
Newport

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Readers' Letters,
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Bricks were a great choice

REGARDING brick pavers in Ironbridge. This is oh so reminiscent of the shrieks of complaint in Oswestry, when bricks were laid to replace concrete slabs in the town centre in 1988/89. The howls of protest at the cost and disruption involved almost drowned the protest against the introduction of wheelie bins. Almost 30 years later the bricks seem to have required little maintenance and provide an excellent non-slip walking surface.

HUGH BATTERSBY
Ellesmere

What benefit does this arrangement bring to the UK?

OUR Government failed to see that the biggest cost to our exchequer is British people forced to claim Jobseeker's Allowance because Europeans are allowed to enter Britain, taken on by employers at a lower cost.

An example, nine years ago a friend who was paid £10 an hour, was sacked and replaced by a Polish worker to be paid £7 an hour. For a 35-hour week the employer saved £5,460 a year.

Cost to the exchequer, £3,393. Jobseeker's Allowance, £1,092 income tax, £655 national insurance, total cost £5,140 without taking into account any claim for housing benefit, council tax or maintenance for a wife and children, and of course the European worker would be entitled to claim tax credits for the £5,460 lower income.

What benefit is this for the UK? A combination of lower tax revenues combined with higher benefit cost is partly the reason chancellors cannot balance the books and our services are starved of finance. People ask for facts, not scare stories.

PETER BREEZE

Wellington

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Care scheme is given top award

AN urgent response service has been recognised for the care it provides patients in their own homes after being named as the winner of a prestigious award.

Powys Urgent Response Service at Home has been announced as the recipient of the Steve Hugh Award and representatives presented with a £1,000 award to support their services. The Steve Hugh Award is given annually by urgent care organisation Shropdoc in memory of Dr Steve Hugh, who was medical director of the organisation in the early years of the service.

PURSH is available to provide short term urgent domiciliary care services in people's own homes 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Dr Russell Muirhead, chairman at Shropdoc, said: "PURSH is a fantastic, dedicated service which provides short-term support in situations where hospital admission is inappropriate. They are also available to support a carer in the event of illness."

Road company set to axe jobs

THE company that fixes Shropshire's roads is laying off workers after suffering a cut in business from Shropshire Council.

Ringway operates as Shropshire Council's highways maintenance contractor.

It says it has been involved in "protracted discussions" over the past 18 months about the council's plan to cut spending and the impact on its workforce.

It says it has no choice but to cut 14 jobs from its 229-strong Shropshire workforce.

Ringway says consultation is already under way with employees affected and that it is liaising with trade unions.

The jobs will go within five weeks, the firm says.

Report by Sue Austin

A NEW first responder vehicle is being used to help people in villages near Oswestry thanks to lottery funding.

The car has been part-funded by the Three Parishes Big Local programme which is investing £1million of Big Lottery funding in the villages of Weston Rhyn, Gobowen and St Martins over 10 years.

Three Parishes co-ordinator Bridget Laraway said that in rural communities the community first responder service made a valuable difference to the emergency response time.

Effie Cadwallader, one of two community first responders based in St Martins, said: "So many people have helped us out. The Three Parishes Big Local Big Grants fund was the icing on the cake."

"Stans Superstore and The Keys support us constantly, and we were also delighted with some financial backing from the local Freemasons Lodges. These are a few of the big helpers but there have been many, many smaller donations from families and individuals in the village which were just as welcome."

John Roberts, St Martins' other community first responder, added: "We are also very grateful for the practical help given by Nick Roberts, of Furrows, and Lincoln McMullen, of The Signitists in Ellesmere, who really bent over backwards to see the project through."

Community First Responders are entirely self-funding and it is a difficult task to cover the cost of replacing a car.

"The little red Fabia was excellent but it was not going to last much longer. We are so grateful to everyone for their ongoing help, and, of course, to the Three Parishes Big Local Partnership for helping us over the final hurdle."



Community first responders Effie Cadwallader and John Roberts with the new car

Fire service reveals new arson levels

NEARLY 400 fires have been started deliberately in Shropshire over the past year, if it has been revealed.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has announced the figures showing 389 deliberate fires had been started since April 1 last year, and called on people to do more to tackle fire crime as part of Arson Awareness Week.

The statistics are down on the previous year when 453 were intentionally started – but bosses say there is still much more to do.

Derek Taylor, from SFRS prevention department, said: "Arson is a significant drain on our resources and can put lives in danger, destroy buildings and be devastating. Arson must be reported."

"If you see anyone setting a fire deliberately, don't accept it, report it."

Lee Howell, Arson Prevention Forum independent chairman, said: "Arson accounts for almost half of all fires attended by the fire and rescue services and can have devastating effects in terms of its cost and consequences."

"We have seen progress but there is still work to be done. This is where members of the public can help."

Rotary club will host health event

A HEALTH awareness day will be held in Oswestry by one of the town's rotary clubs during April.

The Rotary Club of Oswestry and Oswestry Library will be hosting the event on April 23 from 10am until 2pm.

Various health checks will be available to those who go along.

There will be a smoothie bike, free blood pressure checks and advice and support from a wide range of health groups.

It will be held in Oswestry Library and entry is free.

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Conversion of former chapel is approved

A FORMER Methodist chapel and schoolroom will be converted into homes so that the buildings, which are considered heritage assets, can be preserved.

Shropshire Council's north planning committee approved plans for the changes to Gobowen Methodist Chapel in Chirk Road, Gobowen.

In a report to planning bosses, Mark Perry, case officer for Shropshire Council's planning department, said: "The building is neither listed or in a conservation area and therefore is not afforded any statutory protection to prevent it being demolished. However it is considered that the building is an undesignated heritage asset and the aim would be to try and ensure its future preservation rather than removing the buildings and replacing it with new build development."

"Heritage Assets make a valuable contribution towards the character and appearance of an area so where possible putting such buildings into an alternative use is to be encouraged." Plans have been approved which will see the chapel converted to provide an open-plan ground floor with one bedroom and a further three bedrooms upstairs.

Fuel theft levels revealed by police

MOTORISTS drove away from petrol stations in Shropshire without paying for their fuel more than 300 times last year, new figures have revealed.

Detective Inspector Sarah Wagstaff said: "West Mercia Police has worked hard to tackle the issue of fuel theft, and will continue to do so to ensure the number of offences across both Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin is reduced."

New firm celebrates life's simple pleasures

WE MEAN BUSINESS

THE Chronicle's We Mean Business campaign celebrates Oswestry's businesses. This week we celebrate new gift and lifestyle website Brook House Trading Company.

Brook House Trading Company has been set up by Tim and Carrie Morris, Kate and Pete Shaw and Ben Morris who have brought a variety of skills together to offer a unique and different shopping experience.

The idea and name for the company was inspired by Tim, Ben and Kate's childhood - playing in the garden, messing around in the brook and generally enjoying the freedom of the outdoors at Brook House in Llan-yblodwel.

The ethos of the company is to sell a hand-picked selection of products which allow people to enjoy and enhance life's simple pleasures. Although there is a sense of nostalgia, the products are selected with today's needs and trends in mind and embrace the concept of 'modern rustic' - achieving the best of both worlds.

Initially launched as an online shop, the design and feel of the website provides a carefully curated and consumer-friendly shopping experience, feeding into the current and growing zeitgeist of more and more consumers shopping online, at a time to suit them and with a digital platform of their choosing.



Brook House Trading Company has been set up by Pete and Kate Shaw, Ben Morris and Carrie and Tim Morris

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Hundreds caught in drug crackdown

ALMOST 500 people have been arrested in West Mercia in the first year of new drug-driving laws, figures have revealed.

And more than half of those tested at the roadside are giving positive tests.

About 434 roadside drug tests have led to a conviction across the force area, which includes Shropshire and Telford.

Road safety groups say they are pleased with the results and that they are able to see the new laws in practice.

New laws came in last March making it illegal to drive if a person is unfit to do so because they are on legal or illegal drugs, or because they have certain levels of illegal drugs in their blood, even if they haven't affected the ability to drive. Police now have the power to stop drivers and make them do a field impairment test if they believe they may have taken drugs, including a roadside drug kit to screen for cannabis and cocaine.

Peaks challenge will help company

A GROUP which helps people in Oswestry is getting some help itself later this year.

Members of PurpleFish, which organises a wide range of events in and around Oswestry, will be taking on the Three Peaks Challenge in aid of local Community Interest Company, CHALK.

The walkers from PurpleFish, which is part of Hope Church, will set out on June 11 to attempt to climb the highest peaks in Scotland, England and Wales in under 24 hours. They will drive to Ben Nevis in Scotland, for a 5am ascent of the mountain then onto Scafell Pike in the Lake District, and then finally climbing Snowdon.

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NEWS IN BRIEF**Invitation given to firm's auction**

PROPERTY and landowners are invited to put forward their homes, land and commercial property for auction.

Estate agent and property surveyors Morris, Marshall and Poole has announced that its latest collective property auction will take place on April 28. Previous auctions have helped sell a range of property and land throughout Shropshire, Powys, Gwynedd and Ceredigion.

"We're looking for landowners and property owners who are seeking to realise the value of their assets through an auction."

"It's a good opportunity for sellers and buyers alike and we'll have a good mix at the auction," said Andrew Turner, a partner at Morris, Marshall and Poole. Anyone wanting to have a free market appraisal on their land or property can contact auction@morrismarshall.co.uk

Parked vehicle is targeted by yobs

VANDALS scratched a car parked on a Welshpool housing estate, police have said.

And officers also said glue was put into the door lock of the vehicle.

Dyfed-Powys Police said a black Vauxhall Astra, which was parked on the Oldford estate in Welshpool, was targeted between 10.35pm on March 17 and 7.50am the following day.

Police officers in the town have asked people with information to come forward.

Constable Graham Bond said: "An unknown substance, believed to be glue, has been put into the key lock on the driver's door and there is a scratch of about one foot in length across the bonnet."

Anyone with information should call 101.

Family centre boosted by funding from lodge

Report by Naomi Penrose

A FAMILY centre based in Welshpool has been given a helping hand from its local masonic lodge.

Open Door Family Centre in Welshpool has been presented with a cheque for £500 with the cash being raised by members of the town's lodge as part of its 150th anniversary celebrations.

Open Door was founded by volunteers in 1993.

The service is managed by nine voluntary trustees with a dedicated nursery staff team.

It is based at Ty Emralt, Emerald House, based on the Oldford School site, the heart of the local community, offering funded and non funded childcare sessions for two to three year olds.

Melony Carter, Open Door office manager, said: "All the staff, trustees and the children would like to say a big thank you for the generous donation which will go towards our much-needed new outdoor play area."

"This will allow the children to play outdoors during the autumn and winter months."

Open Door Family Centre is a non-profit organisation and relies greatly on contributions. Spaces are now available for the upcoming term. For more details call (01938) 556238 or email info@opendoorfamilycentre.co.uk

Welshpool has one of the oldest masonic lodges in mid and north Wales. The lodge was formed in Welshpool in 1864 and named Welshpool 998 and has met in Welshpool continuously for 150 years.



Trustees of Open Door Family Centre Sara Hudson and Laura Poole receive the cheque from Jonathan Davies

Choirs set to pool talents for concerts

A PAIR of choirs – one in England and the other in Wales – are to make classical music together.

The choirs in Guitlfield, near Welshpool, and Oswestry will perform concerts together.

Gerry Howe is musical director of both Oswestry's Cantiones Chamber Choir and the Guitlfield Singers and it is his brainchild to bring the choirs together this spring to perform some wonderful choral music.

Concerts will be held in Oswestry's Holy Trinity Church and Welshpool Town Hall.

Together, the choirs will number some 50 singers, so the aim is to raise the roofs of both venues.

Concerts are on Saturday at Holy Trinity Church, Oswestry, and on April 16 at Welshpool Town Hall – both starting at 7.30pm.

Tickets cost £10 and under 16s have free admission. Tickets are available in Oswestry from Roworthorn at Old Chapel Court and the Heritage Centre and in Welshpool from Welshpool Jewellers. Cantiones was founded in 1982 by Michael Smith, the then organist of the Parish Church of St Oswald, King & Martyr, Oswestry.

Monument law now introduced

A NEW act designed to improve the protection of Wales' scheduled monuments, many of which stand on agricultural land, has become law.

Deputy Minister for culture, sport and tourism, Ken Skates, said the new law aims to make it easier for landowners to obtain consent and carry out small-scale works of maintenance and repair that have been agreed in advance with its Historic Environment Service (Cadw).

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Women's World

Pastel dye jobs are now all the fashion

IT'S a celeb favourite and now a bona fide catwalk trend, but can we mere mortals in the Oswestry and Welshpool pull off powdery-hued hair?

Top pop stars Rita Ora and Jessie J love baby pink; reality TV personality Kylie Jenner favours mermaid-esque sea green; and singer and TV star Kelly Osbourne has made Parma Violets purple her signature.

It's clear celebs love a pastel dye job, and now the My Little Pony hair trend has hit the catwalks, with models at the Haider Ackermann SS16 show rocking a rainbow's worth of candy colours in their hair.

"We've seen some great on-trend colours being used on celebs and the catwalk, and now consumers can create the looks in salons," says Josh Wood, Wella Professionals' global creative director of colour.

He describes the salon-only Wella Professionals Instamatic as a collection of "soft, diffused and muted tones that allow for unlimited creativity", including Pink Dream, perfect for following Rita and Jessie's lead – but hair will need to be pre-lightened first (find your nearest salon at www.wella.com).

For a more temporary touch of pink that works on darker hair, try Fudge Urban Hair Art Pink Ink spray, currently reduced to £3.99 from £5.99, which disappears after one wash (www.superdrug.com).

If you have warm-toned skin, this works well with peaches and corals," advises Sean Nolan, technical educa-



Singer/songwriter Pixie Lott is known for her coloured hair

tor for HOB Salons. "And hair chalks are great for experimenting, as they are the easiest to wash out."

Tracy Hayes, head of global colouring for Fudge Professional, adds: "Fudge Urban Hair Art sprays are highly pigmented pastel sprays that work even on dark hair and wash straight out, so you can switch up your

hair colour as often as you like."

Another beauty option is Pixie Lott Paint Hair Chalks, currently reduced to £3.32 from £4.99 (www.superdrug.com). And another option is Fudge Paintbox in Coral Blush, £9.25 (available in salon or via www.fudgehair.co.uk)

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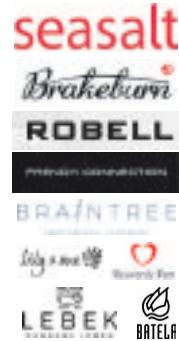
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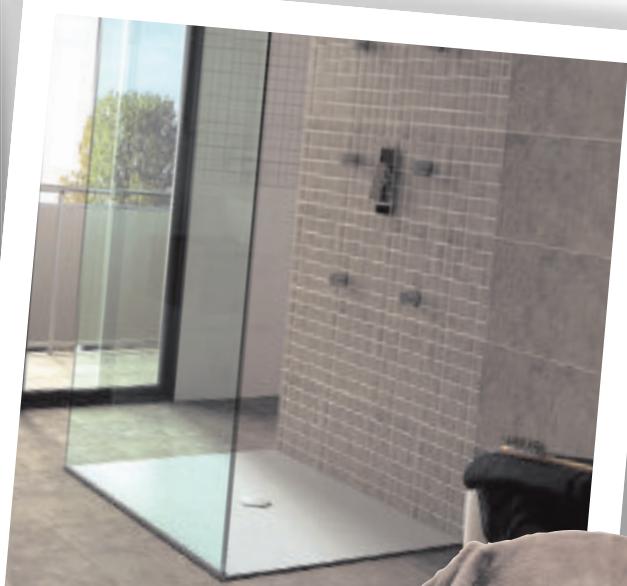
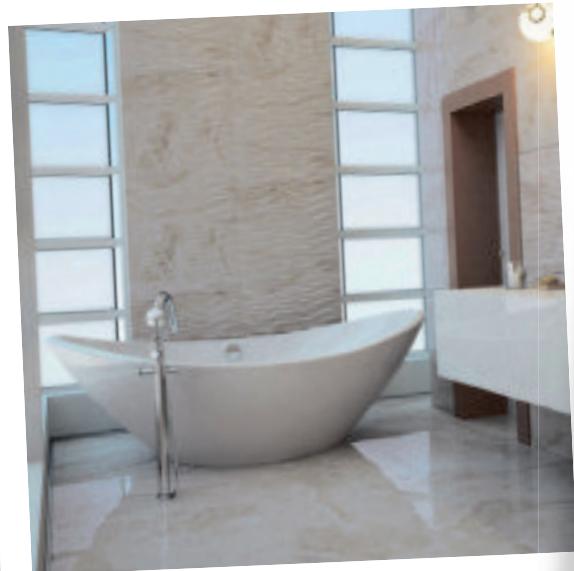
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Jemima wins place with prestigious orchestra

By Sue Austin

MORETON Hall student Jemima Pickersgill has secured a place in the National Youth Wind Orchestra of Great Britain.

Year 11 student Jemima attended a 10-day residential course over Easter and is now focusing on a further course being held in Switzerland over the summer.

The National Youth Wind Orchestra of Great Britain (NYWO) is the UK's premier wind orchestra for approximately 75 young musicians aged 14 to 21. Established as a charity in 1986, NYWO brings together some of the finest young woodwind, brass and percussion players in the country.

The orchestral configuration uses the whole range of clarinets to take the place of violins and violas in a symphony orchestra, resulting in a wonderfully rich and sonorous sound.

Jemima has also got through to the Under 25 solo instrumental competition at the International Eisteddfod in Llangollen in July. At the moment, her focus is on the Gregynog Young Musician Competition where she will be performing on Saturday, April 16.

This is a competition of international standard and many previous finalists have gone on to win the BBC Young Musician award.

Jemima is currently studying clarinet and bass clarinet.

Head of Music, Helen Rayner, said: "Jemima's hard work and commitment to the subject has really paid off, and we are in no doubt that she will excel whilst playing with the National Youth Wind Orchestra of Great Britain, as well as the many other competitions she is competing in. We wish her every success."

To find out more about the fantastic range of opportunities at Moreton Hall, visit the Senior School Open on Saturday, April 23, at 10am.

Visit www.moretonhall.org/Open-Day



Talented Moreton Hall student Jemima Pickersgill has won a place with the National Youth Wind Orchestra of Great Britain

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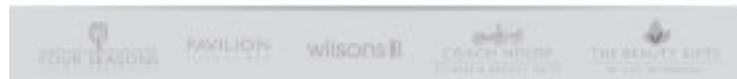
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Petition calls for improved steps safety

PARENTS who struggle to carry their young children's buggies up steps to get to the centre of Oswestry have signed a petition to improve their safety before someone gets seriously hurt.

Pam Ingrey, of Oswestry Mobility, believes it is only a matter of time before an elderly shopper slips and falls or a toddler takes a nasty tumble at the steps at the rear of the Market Hall car park at Plough Bank.

She said: "We are launching the petition in the hope of gaining public support and hopefully funding for the provision of a ramp to replace the dangerous and steep steps."

Kim Tunnadine, who also represents Oswestry Mobility, recently spent a morning gathering signatures at the steps and chatting to residents and market day shoppers about the access problems they face on a daily basis and fears that the steps don't have a light.

Simon Jones and Sophie Maddox, who live in Castlefields, lift their seven-month-old baby's buggy up and down the 10 or so steps every day on their way to and from the town centre.

Sophie said: "Sometimes I have to lift Sienna by myself, with one hand at the back of the buggy and one at the front, so that I keep her steady."

"It is horrible because although many people can see you are struggling they don't stop to help."

Gwendoline Gardener, 84, admitted to being out of puff when she reached the top of the stairs, gripping the handrail.

"I have a stick because I am low sighted and I really have a problem climbing these steps because it hurts my knees," she said. "You shouldn't really be climbing steps at my age."

Young held for gun offences

TEENAGERS as young as 15 have been arrested for gun offences by West Mercia Police, it has been revealed.

Crimes included a 17-year-old boy charged with possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence.

Two 15-year-olds were also charged with carrying an imitation firearm in a public place, one of them with intent to cause fear of violence.

A total of 21 youngsters have been arrested across the force area, which includes Shropshire, for firearms offences since 2013, according to figures provided through a Freedom of Information request. This includes nine boys in 2015, compared with six in 2014 and six in 2013.

Three boys were subsequently charged with firearms offences in 2015, compared with five in 2014 and one in 2013.

Force police and crime commissioner Bill Longmore said any crime involving teenagers possessing guns was concerning, but that the figures needed to be placed in perspective. While three teenage boys were charged with firearms offences in the West Mercia area, more than 80 were charged in urban West Midlands over the same period.

Mr Longmore said the rural nature of Shropshire meant there were a relatively high number of licensed firearms.

Help with water bills is available

RESIDENTS are being urged to find out if they are eligible for savings of up to £250 on their water bills.

North Wales AM Mark Isherwood said he wants to raise awareness about Dwr Cymru Welsh Water's HelpU tariff for customers in households with a total annual income of no more than £15,000.

Mr Isherwood said: "Welsh Water says that many thousands of customers could benefit from HelpU – and some could see their annual water and sewerage bill cut by a half."

"People who qualify only have to get in touch with the company and they'll be helped to make the switch to the HelpU tariff."

"This is an initiative that would benefit many in my constituency and I urge people to think about whether they qualify and, if so, to contact the company immediately."

"We know that for many the water bill exceeds five per cent of household income and so paying it can be a struggle."

Number of animal cruelty cases on the increase



Jack, with new owner Isabel Morris, can now look forward to a happy life



Peaches the cat was found starving in a Welshpool flat

THEY may be man's best friend – but cruelty to animals has risen in Shropshire over the last year.

Nationally, there were 81,146 investigations into cruelty towards the pet commonly thought of as our most loyal companion – dogs – more than twice the number of investigations into cats, of which there were 33,844.

Although complaints and investigations were down nationally, the number of advice or notices given out in Shropshire rose from 1,236

to 1,265. There was a total of 9,895 complaints investigated in 2015 compared to 11,740 in 2014.

A tortoiseshell cat died from starvation in Shropshire.

He was found by the front door of a house in Shrewsbury after the RSPCA was contacted with concerns about his welfare.

The cat's owner had moved out two weeks before, leaving the cat locked in the flat. There was a happier ending for Peaches,

abandoned in a locked flat over the Shropshire border in Welshpool for a week over Christmas while her owner went away to stay with family.

She was discovered by a plumber working in the property, thin and suffering from fur loss.

The owner was disqualified from keeping animals for three years, and ordered to pay a £75 fine and £425 costs.

In Telford, a 10-week-old emaciated kitten was abandoned in a box at a dangerous junction in Jackfield in December.

When he arrived in the RSPCA's care, the kitten – named Jack – was skinny, dehydrated and suffering from diarrhoea and worms.

He was taken to the RSPCA's Gonsal Farm Animal Centre, in Dorridge, and was cared for until he was old enough to be rehomed with Theresa Morris. "He is doing so well. My daughter was desperate for a family pet and he is just a lovely kitten," Ms Morris said.

"It is terrible what happened to him, but we adore him."

Towns battle on to keep traditional markets thriving



Oswestry is a popular border market town



Oswestry's indoor market has plenty of stalls serving a wide range of produce

Report by Naomi Penrose

WITH customer habits changing and more people going online to shop, the traditional market is slowly dying out in some towns.

But despite the trends, traders in Shropshire are doing all they can to save their markets, the halls they use and the accompanying market town status.

Elesmere is just one town in the county where the fight is on to keep the market alive.

Chairman of All Together Ellesmere, Lincoln McMullan said the community interest company was doing what it could to keep things running, but it is now a case of "use it or lose it".

He said: "It used to be a lot bigger – we had rows and traders right back to the walls. It was always full in here."

"We have had some new stalls come and we are just hoping they stay now."

"We are trying to do what we can – the market hall has been repainted and a kitchen has been installed and it has been rewired."

"So it is all here, but not enough people are coming to buy."

In Oswestry, the market is successful and councillors are now hoping it could move into one of the town's main streets in a bid to expand.

It's been held for more than a century on the historic Bailey Head and now organisers also want to use Bailey Street, which connects the area with the rest of the town, for some of the stalls. Some traders have called for the move saying it would encourage more shoppers to walk up the street and visit both the Bailey Head and the indoor market at the Powis Hall.



Chairman of All Together Ellesmere Lincoln McMullan



Oswestry's indoor market is based at the Powis Hall in the town

Property

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING



Substantial family home by waterside has fishing rights

Highclere, Milford Road, Newtown, is a substantial waterside family home with the rarity of 0.75 of an acre of gardens within the town centre. The property is for sale through McCartneys for £400,000. Highclere offers superb five bedroom accommodation and is complemented by ample parking, outbuildings and grounds with river frontage on a picturesque stretch of the Severn. Gently sloping paths and steps lead to the lower lawns, the river, an original air-raid shelter and a sizeable log cabin set among the woodland. There is also a personal river-side jetty giving access to the water ideal for launching canoes and taking up the fishing rights that go with the property. Contact McCartneys on 01686 623123.

Business potential for country cottage

An attractive three-bedroomed detached country cottage in 1.7 acres within the picturesque hamlet of Rhiwlas seven miles from Oswestry. Tyn Y Celyn has outstanding views over unspoilt countryside.

With a privately owned driveway, it is for sale through Bowen Son & Watson at £360,000.

With oil central heating and double glazing the house itself retains some original features.

Its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hall, lounge, dining room, conservatory, kitchen, cloakroom, three bedrooms and a family bath-

room. Outside there is a range of outbuilding including a double garage/workshop, a barn and wash room (with electric and water supplies). The property stands in mature gardens with an adjoining paddock ideal for agriculture, equine or recreational uses.

The nearby village of Llansilin has a good range of local amenities including an excellent primary school. A more comprehensive range of shops and facilities can be found in Oswestry.

The lounge has a solid multi-fuel burner stove set on a slate hearth and partly glazed wooden doors

opening into the conservatory. The dining room has oak flooring, which is repeated to the WC. The kitchen has a Belling range cooker, exposed beams and oak flooring and an archway leading back into the dining area. The master bedroom has fitted wardrobes, as does bedroom two.

The selling agents suggest that a small business could be run from the double garage, which has a workshop room and separate access. For further information contact Bowen Son & Watson on 01691 652367 or visit www.bowensonandwatson.co.uk.



Five bedroom property has outstanding views

A detached five bedroomead country property with outstanding views, Bryn Paenod, Llanfechain, is on the market through JJ Dell & Co with a guide price of £400,000. The property is situated in a large garden and has been extensively refurbished by the current owners to a high standard throughout. Bryn Paenod is a detached property principally built of stone under a slated roof. The accommodation is well appointed throughout with oil fired central heating and upvc double glazing, pine and oak boarded country style doors. Accommodation comprises kitchen, drawing room, sun room, lounge, library, study, cloakroom, five bedrooms and two bathrooms. There is double garaging, a good sized garden and the property is in a private position. The property offers the opportunity to be split to provide separate living accommodation. For more information contact JJ Dell & Co on 01691 653437 and 680212.

J.J. DELL & Co.



Highly desirable family home in popular village

A highly desirable two storey four bedroomead family home within the popular village of Guilsfield, Oak House is on the market through Halls for £385,000. Situated on a generous plot the property is within a short walking distance of all village amenities. The property is spacious, beautifully presented with contemporary fixtures and fittings, together with the benefit of central heating and double glazing throughout. The accommodation provides for entrance hall with doors off to study, ground floor WC, dining room, main reception room, a well fitted kitchen with Rangemaster range cooker and central island, breakfast area and snug. A central staircase leads up to a galleried landing area with doors off to the master bedroom, with en-suite bathroom, three further double bedrooms and the family shower room. For more information contact Halls on 01938 555552.

Halls



Smallholding is in an idyllic rural location

A smallholding in an idyllic rural location, Ty Cerrig at Croesaubach has outstanding views of the Shropshire plain, yet is just three miles from Oswestry. It is for sale through Bowen Son & Watson with a guide price of £350,000. The property is a spacious three-bedroomead detached cottage standing in mature gardens, a range of useful outbuildings, stables and field shelters together with about 10.75 acres of excellent pasture land located in a ring fence immediately to the rear of the house. With some original features, the cottage has double glazing and oil central heating, an entrance hall, lounge, dining room, kitchen, utility room/WC, boot room, three bedrooms and a bathroom. The well-maintained outbuildings include a double garage, livestock shed, stable, barn and a separate field shelter. The land is split into conveniently-sized paddocks. Call Bowen Son & Watson on 01691 652367 or visit www.bowensonandwatson.co.uk

Bowen Son and Watson



Family home is constructed to a high standard

Plas-Y-Don at Cefn Trewern, comprises a superb detached 3-4 bedroom family home constructed to a very high standard in 2005/06, and offering spacious and adaptable accommodation on two floors. It is on the market through Halls for £280,000. The property is beautifully presented and in excellent decorative order throughout. In brief the accommodation provides for a storm porch, a large reception hall, sitting room, study/fourth bedroom with adjacent shower room, superb spacious kitchen/dining/living room with quality fully fitted kitchen, French doors leading out to side elevation gardens with magnificent countryside views, snug, utility and boiler room. On the first floor, there is a master bedroom having the benefit of an en-suite shower room, two further double bedrooms each with 'his and her' fitted wardrobes and a generous sized family bathroom. For more information contact Halls on 01938 555552.

Halls

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**Rhiewlas
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- An attractive 3 bedroom detached country house set in 1.7 acres
- Outstanding views over unspoilt countryside and a privately owned driveway
- uPVC double glazing and oil fired central heating
- Entrance Hall, Lounge, Dining Room, Conservatory
- Kitchen, Utility Area, 3 Bedrooms, Family Bathroom.
- Range of outbuilding including a double garage/workshop.
- Barn and wash room (with electric and water supplies), Mature gardens and adjoining paddock



**Castle Street
Oswestry**

- A deceptively spacious 2 Bedroom End Terrace House
- The property contains a host of original features
- Including stripped floors, brick feature walls and exposed beams.
- Entrance Hall, Living Room and Kitchen
- 2 good size Bedrooms, Bathroom and additional Attic Room
- Slabbed area to the front.
- Gas fired central heating and double glazing. EPC Rating



**Ardmillan Close
Oswestry**

- A rare opportunity to purchase a Detached 4 Bedroom Bungalow
- Large garden to the rear which is enclosed throughout
- Entrance Hall, Lounge, Kitchen, Bedroom 4/Dining Room,
- 3 further Bedrooms and Bathroom.
- Good size rear garden including patio area.
- Enclosed lawn and a long driveway leading to a single garage.
- Gas central heating, double glazing and CCTV are installed



**Fitzalan Road
Oswestry**

- Spacious 3 Bedroom End of Terrace Property set on a corner plot
- Entrance Hall, Cloakroom, Lounge
- Dining Room, Kitchen
- 2 Bedrooms (2 of which are doubles) and Family Bathroom
- Private gardens extending to the front, side and rear.
- Gas central heating and double glazing. EPC Rating E



**Station Road
Llanymynech**

- A spacious FREEHOLD 3 Bedroom Ground Floor Apartment
- Situated in the heart of the popular village of Llanymynech
- Entrance Hall, Lounge, Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms and Family Bathroom
- Off road parking, lawn and courtyard area
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**Weston Road
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- PRICES FROM £123,950
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- Gas central heating and double glazing will be installed as standard
- All properties will come with a 10 year warranty
- Anticipated completion late Summer 2016.



**Aston Way
Oswestry**

- A spacious and well maintained 4 Bedroom Detached Property
- Entrance Hall, Cloakroom, Lounge, Dining Room, Conservatory
- Kitchen, Utility Area, 4 first floor BedRooms and Family Bathroom.
- The property stands in well stocked and established gardens
- Ample off-road parking together with a single garage.
- uPVC double glazing and gas fired central heating throughout.



**Church Lane
St Martins**

- A unique opportunity to purchase a block of development land with full planning permission for the construction of two detached family homes with garages
- The site is situated within walking distance of the popular village of St Martins. The land extends to (0.359 acres) or thereabout and set in an elevated position with views over open countryside
- The approved units have a internal floor area of (1224.50 sqf) per property & are partly serviced with a drainage system in place. Should be of interest to Builders, Developers and Self Builders.



**Laburnum Drive
Oswestry**

- A deceptively spacious 3 Bedroom Semi-Detached House
- Modern kitchen, bathroom and separate WC
- Ent Hall, Lounge, Kitchen, Dining Room, Utility & Cloaks
- 3 good size Bedrooms and a Family Bathroom
- A large enclosed rear garden, further lawned garden and driveway
- Gas central heating and double glazing are installed throughout



**Telford Avenue
Chirk Bank**

- A deceptively spacious 4 Bedroom Detached Dormer Bungalow
- In an excellent position on the edge of the popular village of Chirk Bank.
- Entrance Hall, Lounge, Kitchen, Dining Room,
- 2 BedRooms and Shower Room.
- 2 First Floor BedRooms and Shower Room.
- Well maintained gardens, large driveway and garage
- Gas central heating and uPVC double glazing. EPC Rating D



**Maes Yr Ysgol
Llanfachan**

- A delightful 2 Bedroom Detached Bungalow
- Situated on a small residential cul-de-sac
- Entrance Hall, Lounge, Kitchen, Rear Porch
- 2 BedRooms and Bathroom.
- Lawned gardens to front and rear.
- A tarmac driveway and garage provide ample off-road parking
- Oil central heating and uPVC double glazed windows and doors



**Lower Brook Street
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- TO LET £300 Per Calendar Month
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- The shop extends to approximately 350 sq ft (33 sq m), and is split into a Main Retail Area with rear Store Room/Office and separate WC.
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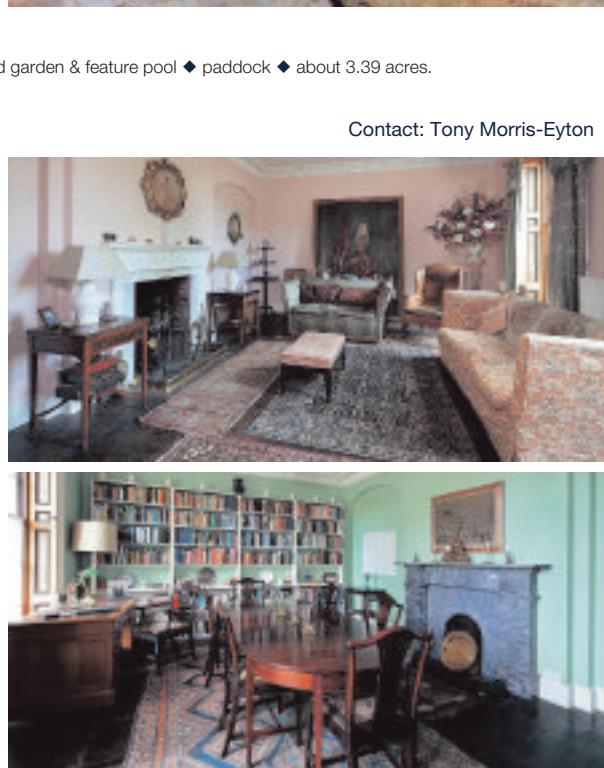
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Guide £799,999

Contact: Tony Morris-Eyton



Buying or selling this spring? Talk to Savills.

Search for turtles had me riding on crest of a wave

THE road to Carrazillo Bay is dusty and worn like the leather vaqueros that ride its length aboard their browbeaten mules, their cigarillo smoke occasionally billowing from beneath their sagging sombreros.

Its surface continues to wilt under the unrelenting pressure of tyre, foot and hoof and is pockmarked by many a downpour and scorching sun. It is punctuated by fan palms and the little territories of spiny lizards, who lie in the early morning rays, moving only to snap at an unwary fly or scuttle back to their lairs at the passing of a figure above.

Approaching the bay you leave the road and wind down a sandy path, hemmed in by larger palms and ensnaring creeper vines. Then the hundreds of steps start and you make your way slowly down to the cerulean blue below. The brown pelicans skim effortlessly over the waters at the mouth of the cove in groups of twos and threes, their wings barely moving and frigate birds wheel above in the cloudless skies.

As you make your way onto the sand after the last step, you glance back at this giant, natural amphitheatre, the basaltic columns capped with green tops and the fluid stage, dazzling and sparkling in front of you.

I had come for reptiles and although the spiny lizards were interesting in their own right and continued their existence down here, they were not my main objective.

In fact my quarry lay 'out there' - sea turtles, in the decidedly choppy surf and, failing to pack my mask, opted to hire the only surfboard available on the beach and do my turtle searching that way.

I was soon out into the bay. I searched all over the place atop my little board without the merest mention of a flipper or scale.

I began to paddle slowly back to shore and as I did so a green sea turtle rose beside me and took a gulp of air. Sometimes good things come to those who wait.

Ben will be exhibiting this Saturday at the Made in Shropshire market, in Shrewsbury town centre.

ON THE WILDSIDE

with Ben Waddams



After an hour or so, I gave up on sea turtles and decided to try and put my pathetic surf skills to the test. Yet the waves that broke near the headland out here were, I suddenly realised, a lot larger than those on the shore. They were fast too and I couldn't catch a single one. I told myself I would give it one last go, but as I looked behind me to see what was coming in, a great green monster rose out of the depths.

As the wave passed the headland that jutted out from the southern entrance of the bay, it surged over the rocks, spray exploding 30 feet into the air. I could see it was going to break more or less on top of me so I paddled for all I was worth. Suddenly I was away, picked up and hurled forward. I stood up gingerly and was assailed by a wonderful feeling, still my greatest wave to date.

However such was the strange hydrodynamics involved that the monster sucked the water from the tops of the rocks before it and me. I was too much of a novice to try and dodge them and I still don't quite know how I came away from that experience unscathed but after a good few seconds I was gently spat out the side of the wave and lay exhausted on my board once more.

I began to paddle slowly back to shore and as I did so a green sea turtle rose beside me and took a gulp of air. Sometimes good things come to those who wait.

Ben will be exhibiting this Saturday at the Made in Shropshire market, in Shrewsbury town centre.



Rare sight – a green sea turtle swimming in the Mexican sea

Concern over number of times police at homes

POLICE were called to incidents at children's homes in West Mercia on nearly 6,000 occasions over the past three years.

The figures have been revealed by the Howard League for Penal Reform, which says children living in care homes are being criminalised at excessively high rates compared to other boys and girls, including those in other types of care.

In West Mercia, police were called to 5,846 incidents at children's homes over three years. There were 1,898 call-outs in 2012/13, 1,938 in 2013/14, and 2,010 in 2014/15.

The charity suggests that there is a systemic problem across England and Wales that leads staff to resort to the police, often over minor incidents that would never come to officers' attention if they happened in family homes.

Council chiefs in the county said initiatives were in place to cut down on the number of callouts.

Frances Crook, chief executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "These children have been taken into care because they are in dire need and their parents cannot, or will not, look after them. They are wonderful young people who have had a really bad start in life. They deserve every chance to flourish. Private companies, charities and local authorities that are paid a fortune by the taxpayer should give these children what they need and deserve."

The findings were published in a Howard League report, Criminal Care: Children's homes and criminalising children.

It calls for more support to be given to looked after children during their teenage years so that they are not pushed into the criminal justice system.

The report draws on Department for Education statistics, which indicate that about four per cent of children aged 10 to 12 who live in children's homes have been criminalised, rising to more than 19 per cent among children aged 13 to 15.

Among 13 to 15-year-olds, children living in children's homes are almost six times as likely to be criminalised as looked after children in other placements – and almost 20 times more likely to be criminalised than a non-looked after child.

Karen Bradshaw, Shropshire Council's director of children's services, said: "Over 400 children and young people in care are placed in Shropshire by other local authorities.

"Shropshire Council works positively with the private care providers in the county, and have already identified the issue of needless criminalisation of some of the most vulnerable children."

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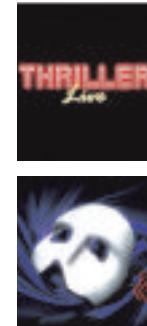
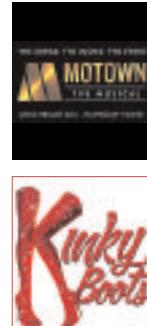
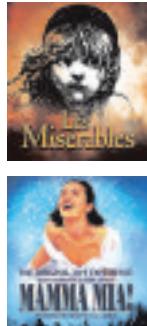
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Includes a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance.

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For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option, see the matinee performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal. The Saturday Night option includes a ticket for the evening performance (meal not included).

Both breaks include a standard priced theatre ticket and the option to upgrade plus an overnight stay in a four-star outer London hotel.



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Balancing the cost of raising your young stock

THE cost of young stock rearing is often the second biggest cost to a dairy farm after dairy feed, so every pound spent on heifers must be justified.

There is a large variation in costs on farm, with a recent AHDB study reporting a range from £1,250 to £3,000 per animal, demonstrating significant potential for improvement. The biggest cost, however, is under-performance. Poorly grown heifers cost more to rear in total, often taking longer to get into the herd, costing £1.50 for every day over 23 months that she is not in the herd. Many studies have also demonstrated that once old heifers enter the herd, they are less productive, have a shorter productive life and are less profitable than well-grown heifers that calf down before 24 months.

The modern cow is genetically more advanced than the dairy cow of old, capable of superior growth rates and faster maturity. Research has shown that the optimum first calving date is 23 months old. To this end, there is no harm in calving heifers at 22 months, as long as they are well grown. Under a well-managed system, targeting profitable, productive heifers, the target serving age needs to be 13 months. With the correct nutritional management, good cow comfort and the use of fertility protocols used in milking cows, any heifer that is not 35 days PD+ by 17 months should be put in the pen to be culled. The extra cost incurred rearing and managing this heifer for the rest of her productive life would be better invested in a heifer that is capable of getting in calf – the first loss is often the best loss.

To reach these targets and have confidence in your system to make management changes, it is imperative that growth rates are measured against targets, so decisions can be made to improve the system. This is also important to control costs and to fully value all incurred costs of heifer rearing.

Growth rates are unique to each herd, based on mature herd body weight. The best way to assess this is to weigh a third lactation cow in average condition. Heifers should calve down at 85 per cent of this weight to fully perform in lactation, but it is inefficient to calve them down at over 95 per cent of mature body weight. Calves need to double birth weight by weaning at eight weeks and continue to grow to be 55 per cent mature body weight before they start to be served. This difference from weaning to service provides the target growth rate on farm. For example, a herd average weight of 650kg would aim to calve heifers at a minimum of 550kg and be served from 360kgs. If calves were born at 40kgs, they would need to be 80kg by eight weeks. It is important that these specific rates are met. Too slow, and significant costs are incurred in keeping heifers longer before calving, or they are undergrown at calving, so yield and profitability are jeopardised. If they grow too fast, there are extra feed costs incurred and there is significant evidence showing if growth rates exceed 1.2kg/head/day that lifetime yield is limited – although this is hard to achieve in practice. Being focused on growth rate targets that are bespoke to your herd ensures that investment in heifer rearing is justified in order to exploit the potential of modern genetics on farm. You only get one chance to get it right and the results last a lifetime.

by Mark Price
Wynnstay Dairy Technical Services

Grants scheme enters final year

THE Meres & Mosses Farm Grant is entering its last year.

There is funding still available for eligible farmers in north Shropshire and south Cheshire and those interested are invited to submit their applications to the grant administrators.

It is primarily available for projects aimed at improving water quality within the project area, although habitat restoration and creation projects will also be considered.

Projects funded to date include watercourse fencing, yard concreting, roofing of handling facilities, rainwater harvesting, a biobed and pond creation.

"The grants will cover 66 per cent of costs up to a maximum of £3,000," said Kathryn Lewis at Davis Meade Property Consultants in Oswestry.

"The application process is straightforward and supported throughout by a project officer."

The Meres and Mosses area is the second largest natural network of ponds and wetlands in England, the Lake District being the largest.

For more information contact Meres and Mosses wetland farm adviser Matt Jones on (01743) 284285, email mattj@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk or speak to Kathryn Lewis at Davis Meade on 07971 583638.

Beef event looks at the latest trends



Farmers in the beef sector are being invited to an industry meeting next week

James is the face of 'new breed' of farmers

WITH the realities of modern farming incorporating the latest technology and innovations, the National Sheep Association (NSA) is keen to dispel the outdated stereotype of the flat-capped farmer whose main intention in life is to hold up traffic in his tractor.

James Manning is fighting this stereotype on the front line, as a forward thinking farmer, and now a TV presenter on BBC 2's Harvest 2015, and Channel 4's First Time Farmers.

He is hoping to inspire other 'farmers of the future' in the new Next Generation area at the NSA Sheep Event on July 27, at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire.

"I believe one of the biggest challenges we face is attracting young enthusiastic people into the industry, people who are going to take us forward into the future," says James.

"For those sorts of people to be interested in the industry we have to showcase what we do, across all sectors. I think the general public needs to see agriculture as a young, exciting and vibrant industry to be a part of."

For the 2016 Sheep Event, NSA is capitalising on its Next Generation project, which includes an ambassador programme that selects a group of 12 young sheep farmers each year to take part in technical training and personal development.

NSA has been running the programme for three years now, so more than 20 NSA Next Generation Ambassadors will be at the event for visitors to speak to.

The new dedicated area will help encourage prospective young entrants to consider sheep farming as a realistic option and encourage those already taking their first steps in a career or business.

There will also be an interactive map, aiming to highlight clusters of young sheep farmers to set up future discussion groups,

FARMING LATEST

and an opportunity to practice media skills. "Industry events like this are great as they bring a lot of people together in one place, so you have a captive audience to engage with," says James, who is looking forward to getting involved in the NSA Next Generation area at the show.

"The great thing about farming is that it's a passion, not just a job. It's our responsibility to try and portray that to new entrants and the wider public, so they buy into it as well."

With a successful TV career to date, James has been able to find a platform to showcase farming for the general public.

"I've always been quite an enthusiastic person, having an open mind-set," he said.

"I've been involved with the family dairy farm from a young age, then I went away to university and learnt about other aspects of the wider industry."

Passion

James' advice for the next generation is simple.

"Open your eyes to everything," he says.

"Take on as much knowledge, even if you think it's complete rubbish, and try and understand your chosen profession to carve out a career path."

By harnessing James's obvious passion for the industry, the NSA is hoping the Next Generation area at this year's Sheep Event will inspire a new breed of sheep farmer.

Engaging with this younger audience, the aim is to utilise all the enthusiasm and skills out there to dispel the myth of the flat-capped farmer.

The NSA Sheep Event is a biennial one-day show.

It is the flagship event of the National Sheep Association, complemented by a series of regional events held within a two-year calendar.

To book your tickets for the event on July 27, visit www.sheepevent.org.uk

AN event aimed at helping the region's farmers tackle problems and capitalise on current trends in the beef industry has been held in Welshpool.

Merial Animal Health partnered with the National Beef Association for the event at the town's livestock market at Buttington Cross on the outskirts of Welshpool.

These events focus on engaging with farmers to discuss how they can tackle problems and find out how they can take advantage of current trends in the industry to improve their own businesses.

Chris Mallon, chief executive of the National Beef Association, said: "As the voice of the beef industry, the NBA has regional committees covering

every part of the UK acting on behalf of members."

Mr Mallon opened the event with an update on price trends and recent NBA work.

This was followed by a presentation from a local Merial representative on the effect of parasites on beef productivity and how to lessen their impact.

Debate

Mr Mallon said: "NBA is keen to encourage engagement and debate."

"We heartily support the partnership approach and will be working together with Merial to promote the beef industry and listen to farmers' thoughts."



James Manning hopes to inspire other 'farmers of the future' at the NSA Sheep Event

Farm activity centre plan is booted out by planners



The centre would have offered stag and hen parties

WELLY-THROWING plans for farm-land in Shropshire have been booted into the long grass.

A proposed farm activity centre, which would have catered for hen and stag parties, have been thrown out by councillors after concerns about the impact on the surrounding area.

A bid to run the activity centre in Bronington, near Whitchurch, was put off by members of Wrexham Council's planning committee early this month after a site visit.

The plans were recommended for approval by planning officers despite 16 objections from members of the public.

Bronington Community Council had also objected to the application,

listing a range of reasons why it should be refused.

These include lack of engagement with the local community, road traffic safety on the A495, parking concerns, noise levels, ecology worries as there are buzzards in the area and the site's proximity to a shooting range.

The centre, which would have been run by Yorkshire-based firm Farm Adventure, planned to host welly throwing, pig herding and games with tractors.

As well as hen and stag parties, it wanted to provide corporate away days and for 12 days a year be used as a DIY wedding venue. The company already provides alternative wedding-themed events in Ripon and

wants to expand into rural Shropshire.

At a recent planning meeting, councillor David Griffiths stated he thought the site visit was well worth the time and proposed the refusal, believing it did not complement the rural setting.

He said: "I got a big advantage of going on the site visit to understand and to see what it was. I don't see it as diversification. I see it as a new enterprise within a rural setting. It is an intrusion to a rural setting; it doesn't compliment the area at all. The road is well known and has a lot of accidents. I am also bothered about the noise. I am 99.9 per cent certain this will be a big disturbance."

Series of events to honour landscaper

ONE of the country's most spectacular estates is set to host a seasonal programme of diverse events, including a series of exhibitions and talks celebrating the 300th anniversary of England's most admired landscaper, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-1783).

From art exhibitions to bluebell walks, mansion tours to discovery workshops, there's something for everyone at Weston Park.

Events take place in the elegant stately home itself or within its stunning 1,000-acre grounds, which is set against the striking backdrop of the rolling Shropshire countryside.

It was Sir Henry Bridgeman (1725-1800) whose vision brought Capability Brown's genius to Weston where he went on to create magical vistas and tranquil hideaways that have helped make the 17th century estate a 21st century treasure. The enduring legacy of these visionaries will be rejoiced at Weston Park throughout 2016.

Part of the celebrations will include a series of exhibitions at Weston Park's Granary Art Gallery. The programme, which has been brought together by Gareth Williams, curator and head of learning, to the Weston Park Foundation, includes a wide range of media that offers new work inspired by Capability Brown, or exploring the antithesis of what he believed in, together with competition opportunities for all aspiring creatives and the work of the next generation of artists. The exhibitions will change on a monthly basis throughout the year.

Here's a selection of highlight events at Weston Park commencing from April 2016 through to summer:

April

Join head gardener Martin Gee for a guided walk on Sunday, April 17, that will include a look at Brown's planting schemes in Temple Wood. Temple Wood is one of two naturalistic paradises created at Weston Park, the other being Shrewsbury Walk; these really are the jewels in the crown,

SPECIAL REPORT

by Simon Stone

for there are very few other places across the country that you will be able to wander through such classic Brown representations.

Landscape artist Tim Scott Bolton has spent the last couple of years visiting a number of Capability Brown projects across the country to paint them in all their glory for a dedicated exhibition at the Granary Art Gallery. As a part of his work for the show, he has painted a number of works depicting Brown's work at Weston Park, including the setting of the Temple of Diana, Temple Wood. The exhibition will also include works which feature the genius of Capability Brown in other parts of England, captured in Tim's inimitable style which fuses the landscape of his subject matter with an almost ethereal light quality.

May

From Tuesday, May 3, to Thursday, May 26, Temple Wood, one of only five pleasure grounds created by Brown will be open for visitors to enjoy. This is the first time that Weston has opened up the wood outside of the main summer season, and is doing so as part of its Capability Brown celebrations so that visitors can explore the avenues of rhododendrons and azaleas in riotous colour, just as Brown envisaged.

The carpets of sweeping bluebells that Weston is famous for, will be the focus of a spring walk on Sunday, May 8. The bluebells and the grounds will be in their picture perfect prime for this, one of head gardener Martin Gee's favourite times of the year.

Cartography – the art of creating maps – was enormously important to Capability Brown in his landscape designs. Simon Vernon takes a very different view of Brown's work in his exhibition at the Granary Art Gallery, but one which would have been very much familiar to him as he went about proposing landscapes, capturing ideas and representing them in map form. As one of the world's leading map-makers, Simon brings painstaking skills to bear in his work. Portraying both architectural detail and



Weston Park sits on the Shropshire/Staffordshire border along the A5

perspective, his works are a piece of history in themselves, truly recording the picture of Brown's and others' landscapes as they appear in the 21st century.

June

Weston Park is pleased to welcome a return show from Russell Gilder, who first exhibited in the Granary Art Gallery in 2010. Based in Devon, and an artist familiar to many from his memorable works in the Royal Academy's Summer Shows, Russell brings a romantic and, at the same time, powerful approach to landscape painting – depicting details of wooden scenes on a large scale, with sensational light depictions.

July

Weston Park's free summer Discovery Workshops will bring the Brown story at Weston to life for younger visitors, with craft activities and nature trails exploring the flora and fauna of the landscapes.

On Thursday, July 28, head gardener Martin Gee will be inviting walkers to join him to explore the wider parkland. Martin's talk will share the story of the parkland of today and how this has been inspired by the legacy of Capability Brown.

August

In the month during which the date of Capability Brown's birth falls, the Sarasin & Partners National Fine Art Open competition will be held at the Granary Art Gallery.

This year artists intending to enter the competition are asked to produce work celebrating Brown's work or being the antithesis of his work, and also to consider the theme of landscape before, during and after his time.

Thanks to the generosity of main sponsor, Sarasin & Partners the main overall prize will be £2,000, whilst a Shropshire/Staffordshire prize of £500 and a People's Prize – to be selected by visitors to the gallery during the exhibition – will also be on offer.

Each of Martin's walk will start at 10.30am.

The cost is adults £6, seniors £5, children £3.

Further details can be found at www.weston-park.com/events/

For further information on Weston Park, its event programme and the opening times of the estate visit www.weston-park.com or to book call (01952) 852100.

Glasgow is a real eye-opener, from start to finish



citizenM hotel offers stylish accommodation

AS the air hostess made her way through the cabin, the passenger in front of me ordered an Irn Bru. I'll give you one guess where we were headed...

To begin with my expectations of Glasgow were not that high, since my knowledge of it was almost all garnered from watching Trainspotting – although set in Edinburgh, the majority of filming took place in Glasgow – five years previously.

But as our plane flew over Scottish hills and prepared to land in a frost-coated city, it felt as if we were arriving into a ski resort.

A feeling that was quickly lost upon entering the city itself.

Glasgow is modern, arty, and thriving, a far cry from a quaint Alpine retreat.

After a taxi deposited us at citizenM – easily the most trendy hotel I have ever stayed in – all thoughts of the Alps were banished for good.

'citizenM hotel Glasgow offers mobile citizens affordable luxury', an online search had informed me.

I was unsure how this would play out, but in reality it did exactly what it said on the tin.

Rooms are equipped with everything you need and more, including tablets which control everything in the room – this kept me entertained for vast amounts of time – and wall to wall built-in beds large enough to sleep an entire family.

In short, at £69 the hotel rooms are amazing.

High up on any visitor to Glasgow's list should be the Kelvingrove Art Gal-

lery and Museum, which covers the history of Glasgow as well as pretty much everything else that has ever happened in the world.

From taxidermied animals which were once native to Scotland, to Salvador Dalí's infamous Christ of St John of the Cross, anything and everything is squirrelled away in its depths, and with free entry you could spend days there.

One of the galleries is dedicated to one of Glasgow's most famous exports: Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

Mackintosh's art nouveau stamp is evidenced throughout the city, including Glasgow School of Art.

The school offers an hour's guided tour of his architectural influence and of a room of similar looking chairs he designed.

Although interesting, the tour is perhaps geared towards more die-hard fans.

Exhibition

As more of an everyday Mackintosh fan, I found the gallery at Kelvingrove to be more interesting and pocket friendly.

Glasgow also celebrates the most modern of modern art, with an exhibition on the 2015 Turner Prize finalists.

After entering the Tramway where the free 'exhibition' – presumably no one would go otherwise – is housed, things swiftly took a turn for the worse. The first exhibit is fur coats on the backs of chairs.

Things continued to descend in a downward spiral of oddness, culminating in the fourth installation: three men who just chanted.

We swiftly exited through the gift shop.

Needing something a little less high-brow we hit the shops, and with every

high street brand under the sun, as well as a plethora of boutiques, here was art I could understand.

Another form of art I greatly appreciated was Glasgow's food.

The breakfast at citizenM was great, with choices of a Scottish breakfast – like a full-English but worse as they substitute black pudding for haggis, I tried it and that's probably where my encounters with haggis will begin and end – pastries, fruits, yoghurt and cereals.

We also enjoyed a meal at The Gannet which offers a modern take on traditional Scottish food.

My black pudding Scotch egg starter was insanely good, as were my boyfriend's smoked scallops.

Starters are priced between £5.50 and £9.50, with mains, such as my red deer in a port and red wine sauce, costing between £15 and £23.

Lunch the next day was enjoyed at The Butchershop Bar & Grill.

I'm not a massive steak fan and my boyfriend doesn't eat beef, so the meal had the potential to not be as divine as the previous day's.

Luckily however, there is more than just cow on the menu, though options for vegetarians are limited.

Starters such as chicken liver parfait or glazed Iberian pig's cheeks cost between £4.95 and £10.95.

Although some steaks cost £28.95, mains such as butternut squash risotto at £12.95 or pan fried sea bass at £15.95 were a little easier on the pocket.

Glasgow was made European capital of culture in 1990.

This is a status the city with a great lust for life deserves to retain.

By Alex Binley



The rooms are smart and excellent value

Woodland walks and plenty of animal fun

RAYS Farm is a special place to bring the family and enjoy a relaxing day in some of Shropshire's finest countryside.

From guinea pigs to reindeer, chickens to owls, and not forgetting the pygmy goat paddock, children love being able to pet and stroke the baby goats.

There's also Rufus, a magnificent red deer stag and his herd, plus miniature ponies and alpacas.

In the Small Animal Barn, the latest arrivals are always on display.

Alongside the farm animals of Rays Farm, there are also two woodland walks – Mythical Woods and Fairy-tale Forest.

Follow the Myth and Magic Wood Sculpture trail through the ancient woodland paths to find the unique carvings.

After exploring Rays Farm, enjoy a barista-style coffee and freshly made panini in the Country Cafe, with homemade cakes always on offer.

Before you depart Rays Farm, take a moment to look around the newly-stocked gift shop.

There are plenty of gifts to suit, from pocket money to birthday presents – or just as a treat for yourself.

To ensure you get the most out of your visit to Rays Farm in the spring, please remember to take along wellies or boots if there has been recent rain.

Visitors are advised to not follow their sat-nav from Bridgnorth.

It will direct you down tracks and lanes which do not lead to Rays Farm.

Rays Farm Country Matters is based at Billingsley, Bridgnorth, WV16 6PF.

Telephone (01299) 841255 for further information.

Festival is set to be a huge draw again

THE popularity of the horse section at the Royal Welsh Spring Festival continues to grow each year and draws competitors and horse-mad spectators from far and wide.

The 2016 festival will not disappoint eager equine enthusiasts, organisers have said, ahead of the farming extravaganza.

They say there are 86 classes scheduled throughout the weekend of May 21 and 22, promising an exciting two days of competitions.

For the second year running, the festival will host classes in two rings with working hunter and show jumping competitions, the affiliated CHAPS (Coloured Horse & Pony Society) Mid Wales Regional Show classes, and new for this year, the British Miniature Horse Society classes, Donkey Breed Society classes and the Veteran Horse Society Area Qualifier 2016.

With the deadline of April 11 fast approaching, the horse entries and stable applications have been coming in thick and fast.

Only pre-entries will be accepted, there will be no entries taken at the event.

Schedules and entry forms can be found at www.rws.wales.

Visitors to the Spring Festival will also be treated to a spectacular demonstration from the Gentle Giants Shire Horse display team.

They'll demonstrate their strength and abilities – and even challenge the children to a game of tug-of-war!

Another spectacle not to be missed in the festival main ring is the exhilarating scurry driving competitions. This exciting equine sport gets the crowds gasping and cheering as pairs of ponies pulling specially-built racing carriages weave their way through a series of obstacles at break-neck speed, culminating in the championships on Sunday.

And if that wasn't enough horsey business, the festival has an equine charity lined up. The Veteran Horse Society will be bringing their patron, a very gallant and humble 28-year-old horse called Percy. He is best known for his appearances in the films Braveheart and Rob Roy, where he was ridden by Mel Gibson and Liam Neeson respectively.

Despite having retired from his acting roles and being of very modest character, Percy is very much looking forward to meeting his adoring fans at the Spring Festival. For more information, or to get your discounted e-ticket for the festival, visit www.rws.wales.

All children aged 16 and under go to the Spring Festival for free.

Any tips for days out, holidays or places to visit? Email your ideas to lisa.bailey@shropshirestar.co.uk

Old luggage evokes the golden age of travelling

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

By John Ridgway of Perry and Phillips



THERE is nothing quite so evocative of travelling in days gone by as pieces of vintage luggage.

No matter how battered and worn they are, they still conjure up images of rail travel in its heyday, car trips to the seaside, ocean voyages aboard a luxury liner and even early plane flights.

Today they look great displayed in the home and always provide a talking point – plus they offer extra storage space.

Old suitcases and trunks are especially of interest if they still feature labels from trips in days of yore and if they are personalised with name and address details.

Look out for hat boxes, vanity cases, carpet bags (think Mary Poppins) and sets of matching luggage – even blanket boxes used for travel purposes, especially those with little brass name plates.

Smaller items will include travel perfume sets, complete with little glass bottles, and gentlemen's leather grooming bags.

Any item of luggage carrying 'famous' labels, linking it to a voyage with White Star or Cunard for example, will be of great interest to collectors so if you are keen to buy be prepared to spend quite a bit.

It is still possible to find luggage that once belonged to ocean liner personnel, such as seaman's trunks, again these may prove pricey but they look terrific in almost any room.

And of course there are maker names to look out for, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Prada.

Louis Vuitton founded his legendary company in 1845, opening a packing and box-making workshop in Paris and going on to make stackable trunks suitable for rail travel.

He quickly became successful, expanding his workshop and earning a bronze medal at Napoleon's Exposition Universelle in 1867.

In 1872 he introduced a red and beige striped canvas trunk, sold as a luxury item, and the rest is history. His son Georges took over the company in 1892, creating the company's famous logo of flowers, diamonds and circles, and in 1914 the Louis Vuitton building



became the biggest travel goods store in the world with Coco Chanel as its patron, and travel bags that remain popular today such as the Steamer bag, the Keepall and the Papillon were manu-

factured.

Now a worldwide company, Prada began life in Milan in 1913, when Mario Prada started to produce shoes, handbags and trunks.

The famous Prada suitcase was initially manufactured from walrus skin but as travel by plane became more popular lighter bags were needed.

The company went into decline during the 1970s but was revitalised in 1979 when Miuccia Prada became head of the family business, introducing luxury tote bags and backpacks, and now of course the name Prada is synonymous with high-fashion luggage.

Gucci Gucci worked as a young man at the Savoy Hotel in London during the 1920s and was very impressed by the high-quality luggage owned by guests – so much so that he returned to his native Italy to start a small luggage company in Florence.

He made luggage and other luxury leather travel goods, expanding during the 1930s and using canvas rather than leather when the latter was scarce during the war.

Once again now a famous worldwide product, Gucci luggage was especially popular during the 1960s when it was much favoured by the so-called 'jet set'.

As always, check the condition of vintage luggage before you buy; any damage should be reflected in the price.

Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm at their Mill Street saleroom in Low Town, Bridgnorth, and auctions of antiques and collectibles are held on the first Tuesday of each month.

It's hard to handle retailers' lack of care over bags

THIS week I went shopping with my mother to buy an outfit for our son's – her grandson's – wedding.

She was handed the garments without a carrier bag, unless of course she wanted to pay for one! A high-priced outfit was folded and pushed across the counter towards us; the same happened with the hat and bag. I was unhappy: surely clothing companies can supply a lovely branded, paper carrier that is exempt from the plastic carrier rule?

It made me wonder how many people are actually aware of the rules. The government website www.gov.uk states that five pence must be charged for a bag that is unused, plastic and up to 70 microns thick (a micron is one thousandth of a millimetre), has handles, and is opening and isn't sealed.

A retailer is not required by law to charge for woven plastic bags or paper bags but can voluntarily choose to, and a business is also not required to charge for a bag if they have

STYLE FOCUS

With Janet Timmis

fewer than 250 full-time employees. You as a customer are now expected to carry a reusable bag. A bag for life is a bag sold for more than five pence, reusable and should be replaced free of charge if returned to the store when worn out.

You should not be charged for a plastic bag when you buy uncooked fish, meat and their products, as well as unwrapped food for animal or human consumption, unwrapped loose seeds, flowers, bulbs, roots and stems. The list also includes goods contaminated by soil (e.g. potatoes), unwrapped blades/knives, prescription medicines, anything used for a ser-

vice (dry cleaning) and free promotional materials.

The single-use carrier charge is to reduce the amount of plastic carriers causing danger to animals and littering the environment, and the revenue collected from their sale goes to good causes.

This is a good thing, but are businesses who are charging when they are not required by law to do so pushing their customers towards online shopping? It is part of the good service that would retain our patronage to offer an alternative. Retailers could take a leaf out of Primark's book with free, branded, paper carriers.

We see the words "ethical" and "recycling" everywhere, we are all aware of the need to protect the earth. Oxfam states that 350,000 tonnes of clothing goes to landfill each year, which amounts to 9,000 items every five minutes. An average household owns approximately

£4,000 of clothes according to WRAP charity and 30 per cent of those items have not been worn for over a year.

We all need to consider how much we buy, and how we get rid of our unwanted clothes in this throwaway society and consider what can be produced from our recycled rubbish.

Plastic bottles can be made into fibre fabric, charity shops gain income for good causes from clothing we discard, and the "cash for clothes" businesses send clothing to poorer countries. Consider "make, do and mend" – it is the creative amendment of existing clothing to make up-to-date garments.

Perhaps we should learn to become a giveaway society rather than a throwaway society.

Visit www.jfexclusive.com, www.jflgarmentsolutions.co.uk and follow jflifeandlovelon tumblr

Savings shake-up: how will it help our pockets?

Report by Simon Stone

A BIG savings shake-up is on its way – so how will it help you? Here we take a look at what the future holds for our finances.

With the Bank of England base rate having stood at a rock bottom low for seven years, the returns on offer have been paltry.

By March 2016, the average easy access cash ISA was paying a rate of just 1.05 per cent, compared with 1.77 per cent in March 2009, according to financial information website, Moneyfacts.co.uk.

But there is some fresh hope for savers in the form of a new personal savings allowance, which will come into force on April 6, to coincide with the new tax year.

WHAT IS THE PERSONAL SAVINGS ALLOWANCE?

The new allowance means most people will no longer pay tax on the interest they earn on their savings pots.

Banks and building societies will stop deducting tax from account interest.

If you are a basic rate taxpayer you will be able to earn up to £1,000 in savings interest tax-free, while higher rate taxpayers will be able to earn up to £500.

WHAT COUNTS AS SAVINGS INTEREST UNDER THE NEW RULES?

Savings income includes account interest from bank and building society accounts, as well as accounts with some other providers, such as credit unions and Treasury-backed National Savings and Investments (NS&I).

It also includes some other types of income, such as that from government or company bonds.

WILL INTEREST FROM ISAS BE INCLUDED?

Money held in tax-free ISAs will not count towards the allowance as this is already ring-fenced from the taxman.

DO I NEED TO DO ANYTHING TO CLAIM MY ALLOWANCE?

No. But if you are a basic rate taxpayer and earn interest of more than £1,000, or a higher-rate taxpayer earning interest of more than £500, you will still have to pay some tax on this.

If this is the case, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will normally collect the tax by changing your tax code. Banks and building societies will give HMRC the information they need to do this.

IS IT STILL WORTH PAYING INTO AN ISA?

There are already quite a few places outside an ISA where you can find decent rates – for example, several current accounts now offer rates of 3 per cent, 4 per cent and 5 per cent.

But, while interest rates generally are low, it's also important to consider what will happen when rates eventually start to increase – and the amount of cash you earn in interest also starts to go up.

It could mean more of your personal savings allowance gets used up, and you may



With the Bank of England base rate having stood at a rock bottom low for seven years, the returns on savings have been paltry

start to go over it and be liable for tax on your savings once more. Once money is in an ISA meanwhile, it is ring-fenced from the taxman for good, until it is withdrawn.

And there was a boost for ISA savers in the recent Budget.

It was announced that the total annual amount you are allowed to save into ISAs will increase, from its current level of £15,240 to £20,000 from April 2017.

It's also worth considering saving into a new Lifetime ISA, details of which were also announced in the Budget.

The new Lifetime ISA accounts, set to be available by April 2017, can be opened by people aged between 18 and 40, and any savings they put in before their 50th birthday will receive an added 25 per cent government bonus.

Bonus

This means 25p will be added by the Government for each £1 put in by the saver, up until the age of 50.

The new Lifetime ISA accounts, in which people will be able to save up to £4,000 a year, are intended as a way for younger

people to save for their first home, and their retirement, in the same pot. The new scheme will mean that over their lifetime, savers putting £128,000 away will be able to get a bonus of up to £32,000, plus any growth on their investments.

The UK Government also launched Help to Buy ISAs, which help first-time buyers save for a deposit by offering a bonus.

The maximum Government bonus from Help to Buy ISA is £3,000. To receive that, someone will need to have saved £12,000.

Mortgages

Meanwhile, one in five mortgage holders would be forced to make spending cutbacks if interest rates started rising – and one in 14 would seriously struggle to cope – a report has found.

Half of people surveyed for Nationwide Mortgages said they were already using credit cards and overdrafts to fund everyday spending, including food bills.

If rates moved at all, 20 per cent said they would have to cut back on spending and a further 7 per cent believed it would

leave them seriously struggling. Nearly one in five (18 per cent) of the 2,000 homeowners with mortgages surveyed had no rainy day fund to call on in case of emergencies.

House prices surged by 7.9 per cent annually in January to reach a new record high of £292,000 on average across the UK, official figures show.

A first-time buyer faces paying 7.7 per cent more for a property than a year earlier, with the average price paid for a starter home standing at £222,000 in January 2016, according to the report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Property website Rightmove recently said the average asking price for a home has passed the £300,000 milestone across England and Wales for the first time.

FINANCIAL FACT

For every savings rate on the market that increased in February, around 20 were cut, according to Moneyfacts.co.uk.

In February, Moneyfacts recorded 12 savings rate rises – and 23 rate decreases – with some deals falling by as much as 0.74 per cent.



Some of the many items for sale at the event



Jackie Hughes, from Cheshire, with an unusual alien child's ride



Linda Stileman with a very early washing machine



Mike Cooke, from Market Drayton, with his glass and China collection. Photos: John Sambrooks

Intriguing items at antique event

CROWDS flocked to pick up a few bargains and view some highly interesting items at a three-day antiques and collectors event.

Following the massive success of last year's first three-day event, Amulet Fairs staged another show over the Easter weekend at Oswestry Showground at Park Hall.

Visitors to the weekend's event were able to take a look around three massive halls packed with stalls.

The stalls were selling a huge range of items ranging from 17th century furniture to 1960s kitsch.

And acres of outside stalls sold antiques, architectural salvage and an eclectic mix of interesting collectable and decorative items at the showground.

Among the interesting items was a very early washing machine, brought to the event by Linda Stileman.

Report by Naomi Penrose

Mike Cooke, from Market Drayton, brought his large glass and China collection to the Park Hall event.

Another eye-catching item was brought by Jackie Hughes, from Cheshire, who showed off an unusual alien child's ride.

Military enthusiasts were in for a treat thanks to Mike Williams who brought his collection of weapons to the event.

And Nicky Myatt, from Kidderminster, showed off an old press at the show.

This year marks a special anniversary for the family-run business, as Amulet Fairs is celebrating 10 years of events at Oswestry and also 30 years of hosting antique fairs throughout North Wales, Cheshire and the North West of England.

Amulet Fairs' programme runs throughout the year at Oswestry with antique and vintage weekend fairs on June 11-12, September 10-11 and November 19-20.

The firm will also be returning to the historic centre of Oswestry for its third year of antique street markets. The street markets take place on May 13 and August 19.



Nicky Myatt, from Kidderminster, with an old press



Vintage kitchen utensils were on display



Mike Williams with his collection of weapons at the Park Hall event

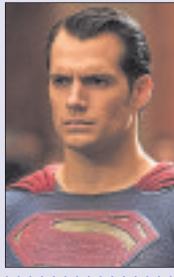
Cinema listings

ZOOTROPOLIS (PG)



Bouncing – 8/10
Judy (Ginnifer Goodwin) earns her police badge as part of the Mammal Inclusion Initiative but police chief Bogo doubts her abilities. In order to prove her worth, the new cop on the block vows to solve the case of a missing resident. Working with an animal who should be her sworn enemy, Judy stumbles upon a grand conspiracy. Zootropolis is 108 minutes of unadulterated joy.

BATMAN VS SUPERMAN (12A)



Not so super – 6/10
The world struggles to come to terms with the arrival of Metropolis' modern-day messiah, Superman (Henry Cavill) as tortured vigilante Batman (Ben Affleck) holds him accountable for the deaths of the innocent and declares war. While the two crimefighters are locked in battle, aided by Lex Luthor's scheming, a new threat arises.

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE (15)



Spine-tingling – 8/10
After her car crashes Michelle wakes up in an underground bunker with survivalist Howard Stambler and his neighbour Emmett. As she regains her strength, Michelle learns that Howard saved her shortly before a devastating global attack, rendered the surface of the Earth uninhabitable. However, Michelle isn't sure if she can trust Howard.

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING 2 (12A)



All Greek to us – 4/10
It seems like a lifetime since Greek-American singleton Fotoula Portokalos shocked her nearest and dearest by falling in love with non-Greek upper middle class beau, Ian Miller. Now they are happily married with a rebellious 17-year-old daughter, Paris who is applying to colleges on the other side of the country so she can wriggle free of her overly protective parents.

A soar-away success

Review by Damon Smith

WHEN Baron Pierre de Coubertin kindled interest in the modern Olympic movement at the end of the 19th century, he proposed a series of ideals to epitomise the spirit of the sporting contest.

"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well," he professed.

That mantra of fearless yet honest participation was perfectly exemplified by Cheltenham-born athlete Eddie Edwards, who became a media sensation in 1988 when he represented Great Britain in the ski jump in Calgary. His remarkable story of triumph against gravity, which swelled the patriotic hearts of a nation, provides the creative spark for Dexter Fletcher's silver medal-winning comedy drama.

Screenwriters Sean Macaulay and Simon Kelton don't let the truth get in the way of telling a good yarn, slaloming between historical fact and humorous artistic licence to ensure their film remains giddily airborne.

Fletcher's light touch behind the lens concentrates on the camaraderie between a remarkable underdog and his fictional trainer, who defied the snooty naysayers to prove that anything is possible when you take a leap of faith.

Since he was a boy, Eddie (Taron Egerton) has driven his father Terry (Keith Allen) to distraction with a burning dream to compete in the Olympics.

The young man struggles to find a sport that suits him, so he switches attention to the Winter Olympics and discovers a loophole in the rulebook that would allow him to become Britain's first representative in the ski jump since 1929. Aided and abetted



Taron Egerton and Hugh Jackman star as plucky ski jumper Eddie The Eagle and his fictional trainer Bronson Peary

by his mother Janette (Jo Hartley), Eddie heads to Germany to a ski jumping training centre run by hard-drinking former competitor Bronson Peary (Hugh Jackman), who was booted off the US team by legendary coach Warren Sharp (Christopher Walken). Bronson takes pity on Eddie and helps the newcomer to master the basics.

However, Dustin Target (Tim McInnerny), chairman of the British Olympic Committee, refuses to let Eddie compete on a technicality and adds a qualifying standard of 61m to the rulebook at the last minute.

With time running out before the Calgary games, Eddie hits the European ski jumping tour with Bronson, determined to soar to break records rather than bones in his quest for Olympic qualification.

Eddie The Eagle is an unabashedly crowd-pleasing delight for all ages.

Egerton brings a sweetness and steely resolve to his plucky fish out of water, who defiantly tells a crowded news conference: "I did not come here as a novelty act... and I will not be going home as one."

Jackman offers robust support, rabblerousing from the sidelines.

In real life, Edwards never climbed atop the Olympic winner's podium, but this charming film is champion.

Book reviews

LOOKING PAST

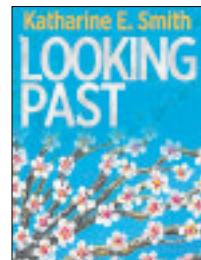
By Katharine E. Smith
Published by Heddon

The loss of a mother is hard for an 11-year-old to deal with.

Sarah and her father attempt to carry on living their lives hoping that time will heal their hearts.

Eventually Sarah leaves home to go to university, beginning a serious relationship with James Poole, her first boyfriend.

His mother rules her household and Sarah has misgivings about being drawn into such a matriarchal family, soon discovering that having a mother figure in her life again brings mixed blessings.



This well-written story illustrates the sensitivity of the author towards the strong emotions felt by young people. I enjoyed the depiction of Sarah's life with her father. A satisfying book to read.
By Sally Bunn

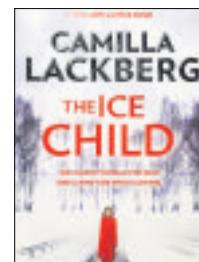
THE ICE CHILD

By Camilla Lackberg
Published by Harper Collins

A small girl, killed by an unknown car while walking on a road near some woodland, was reported missing four months previously.

She is one of several missing children from nearby towns that have come to the attention of Detective Patrik Hedstrom, head of a police force in Fjallbacka, Sweden.

It is obvious that the dead child has suffered brutal treatment and Hedstrom is desperate to find the other children before they, too, are found lifeless.



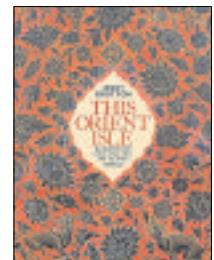
Unable to find any clues to help him solve the case Hedstrom consults his wife, a crime writer researching an old murder case. He is amazed to find there are surprising connections.
By Sally Bunn

THIS ORIENT ISLE

By Jerry Brotton
Published by Allen Lane

From the Crusades to modern conflicts in the Middle East, the UK is often perceived as at odds with elements of the Islamic world.

But Professor Brotton reveals a time of co-operation in his book, subtitled Elizabethan England and the Islamic World. In 1570, after numerous plots and assassination attempts, Queen Elizabeth I was excommunicated by the Pope as a heretic, due to her refusal to bring the Church of England under the control of Rome. With Catholic Europe united



against England, the isolated monarch set about wooing the master of the Near East, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople, and the leaders of Morocco.
By Leon Burakowski

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Screen and TV legend Joan Collins is coming to Shropshire later this year



Welsh rockers Stereophonics will play their biggest hits in Wrexham in July

Legendary acts are all set to entertain

SOME of the biggest names in the world of entertainment will be coming to the region to entertain people from Oswestry and Welshpool.

Hollywood legend Dame Joan Collins will be coming to Shrewsbury with her one woman show in the autumn.

The star of Dynasty and dozens of Hollywood films and TV shows will appear at Theatre Severn on September 13 in her show *Joan Collins Unscripted*, when she will share stories and secrets from her celebrated life and career.

Fans will get the chance to grill the star about her glittering career in Hollywood during a question and answer session.

Speaking about the tour she said: "I so enjoyed my 10 years performing One Night with Joan all over the world that I am delighted to be doing an entirely new show. Each performance will be different."

The appearance of 82-year-old Dame Joan in Shrewsbury is a coup for Theatre Severn. The only other Midlands appearance will be at Birmingham Town Hall on September 26.

Promoter Peter Taylor said: "Joan Collins is a global icon and we are delighted to be able to bring the show to Shrewsbury."

"She is a true national treasure whose amazing career was born in the golden age of Hollywood and transcends the decades through her film, television and literary work."

"As you can imagine Dame Joan has a pretty unique and engaging story to tell. The audience in Shrewsbury is in for a special night where they will be regaled with stories from a bona fide British entertainment legend."

Joan Collins has appeared in more than 118 feature films and TV shows, including creating the role of Alexis Carrington on *Dynasty*, one of the most highly-rated television dramas of all time.

Her novels and memoirs have sold more than 50 million copies worldwide and have been translated into 30 languages.

On stage, she has performed on Broad-

SPECIAL REPORT

By Naomi Penrose

way, the West End, and in national tours across the UK and North America.

Music fans from Oswestry and Welshpool will be in for a treat when Welsh rockers Stereophonics headline a concert in Wrexham in the summer. Up to 20,000 people are expected to attend the gig, the first at Wrexham Glyndwr University Racecourse Stadium for 30 years.

Stereophonics will be joined by Brit Award winners Catfish and the Bottlemen and guests on July 2.

The university and partner VMS Live spent months organising the event with the aim of delivering a top-class day of live music for the region.

Lynda Powell, from the university, said: "It's more than 30 years since the stadium has held a concert so getting a top name like Stereophonics, and rising stars Catfish and the Bottlemen, is a major coup for us."

"We hope this will be the first of many live shows taking place at the stadium over the coming years as our relationship with VMS Live grows stronger."

Stereophonics have a huge summer ahead with 10 dates already planned including a headline slot at the Isle Of Wight Festival in June.

Meanwhile, a music festival is to return to Shropshire with a town centre venue and superstars The Happy Mondays as the headline act.

Shrewsbury Fields Forever Festival will fill the town's Quarry park in July. The event attracted more than 16,000 at its height, but a contractual dispute meant it was forced to move from Shrewsbury's West Mid Showground and was cancelled last year.

Now organisers say the festival will return "bigger and better" in the heart of the town from July 15 to 17.

Festival director Dene Edwards said: "It's a real coup for the county to secure The Happy Mondays."



The Happy Mondays will entertain their fans in Shrewsbury in the summer

Lots of entertainment lined up for hospice birthday party



A WHOLE host of entertainment is being lined up to celebrate the 21st birthday of a popular children's charity.

Plans are well under way for Hope House Children's Hospice, which is based at Morda near Oswestry, to celebrate its landmark birthday in style.

Among the events to celebrate the milestone is a gala marquee ball and a birthday extravaganza both at The British Ironwork Centre in Oswestry.

Organisers of the event say they expect to welcome more than 1,000 guests to the celebration.

The Birthday Extravaganza will take place on June 26 from 10am to 5pm.

The event at the centre, which is based at Aston off the A5 near

Oswestry, will be a fun for all birthday party.

The big birthday party will feature entertainment for children, fun activities to take part in, retail stalls to browse, afternoon tea and much more.

Lynsey Kilvert, area fundraiser from Hope House Children's Hospice, said: "The day's festivities are certain to be a hit with families and children of all ages."

"Together with the British Ironwork Centre we look forward to welcoming more than 1,000 guests to celebrate the help and support given to local terminally-ill children and their families for the past 21 years."

"Our thanks go to our sponsors the British Ironwork Centre and GS and PA Reeves Timber Merchant for making this event possible."

Organisers are appealing for any retailers that would like to have a stall

at the event to book early. Pitches are available for £50 or you can book a double pitch for the discounted rate of £75.

Booking forms can be obtained by emailing fundraising@hopehouse.org.uk or contacting the team on (01691) 671671 as can further information about either event.

Hope House Children's Hospices – Hope House at Oswestry and Ty Gobaith at Conwy – provide care and support to life-limited children, young people and their families from Shropshire and Cheshire and from North and Mid Wales.

● Photo – Rachel Jones, Lynsey Kilvert and Chloe Evans, fundraisers from Hope House Children's Hospice and Wayne Aston, cafe manager The British Ironwork Centre look forward to the birthday celebrations

Amsterdam & the Dutch Bulbfields

Europe's largest and most beautiful gardens 'KEUKENHOF' opens its doors every spring to visitors. See the dazzling displays of tulips, narcissi, hyacinths and other bulb flowers in all their glory covering over 32 hectares. It is a magnificent park with ongoing indoor and outdoor exhibitions which are quite unique. Take home lots of ideas for your own garden!

Princess Hotel ****, Loosdrecht

Fantastic setting on the Loosdrecht Lakes, all attractive 67 bedrooms are set over 2 floors, with TV and tea/coffee making facilities. The restaurant and bar is open plan and modern with views of the lake. Situated in the town centre the location is perfect for a stroll into town.

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- Visit to the Netherlands to Amsterdam
- Visit to the Simonseveen Cheese Farm & Wooden Shoe Factory
- Visit to Volendam

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Classified Ads

**Can't Touch This**

6.10pm

A karate instructor, a would-be Red Coat, and a baker from Armagh with a terrible sense of direction are among the 16 contestants battling their way through a giant obstacle course. If the competitors are able to lay hands on any of the goodies within, they can take them home.

**Flog It!**

3.15pm

Antiques experts Caroline Hawley and Adam Partridge visit Haddon Hall in Derbyshire, where they inspect an RAF drinks dispenser and a cricket bat with vintage signatures on it. Plus, presenter Paul Martin explores the industrial heritage of the area by visiting Smedley's Mill.

**You're Back in the Room**

8.25pm

Antony Cotton and Jennie McAlpine, perhaps better known as Coronation Street's Sean Tully and Fiz Brown, join Phillip Schofield and renowned illusionist Keith Barry as five more hypnotised strangers team up to win a potential £25,000. Last in the series.

**The Grand National Live from Aintree**

2pm

Clare Balding and Nick Luck present coverage of the 169th staging of the world's most famous steeplechase at Aintree, the 5.15 Crabbie's Grand National (4m 2 1/2f). Plus, coverage of all the races leading up to today's main event.

**NCIS**

8pm

The team investigates the cause of a hit-and-run incident in which a Petty Officer has been killed. Meanwhile, Gibbs works to clear a Navy Hospital Corpsman who has been indicted for illegally providing medical aid to victims of the crash, despite the injured insisting her techniques helped save their lives.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast.
10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. Lorraine Pascale guest hosts the cookery show, with assistance from leading chefs Bryn Williams and Claus Meyer, while wine expert Susie Barrie selects the drinks.
11.30 MasterChef. The third quarter-final. (R)
12.00 BBC News; Weather.
12.10 Football Focus. Dan Walker and guests look ahead to the weekend's matches, which include West Ham United v Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester United.
12.50 Saturday Sportsday. Sports round-up.
1.00 Kelly Holmes: My Marathon Story. Paula Radcliffe interviews her fellow former athlete Kelly Holmes.
1.30 Golf: The Masters Highlights. Hazel Irvine presents action from the second day at the Augusta National in Georgia, as the players involved looked to make the cut in the first Major of the year.
2.30 Bargain Hunt. The teams head to Norfolk, where they search for items to take to auction with the help of Catherine Southon and Jonathan Pratt. Tim Wonnacott visits Ham House in Surrey. (R)
3.15 Escape to the Country. Jules Hudson helps a couple find a property to house themselves, some relatives and an expanding business within Norfolk on a budget of £850,000. (R)
4.00 Final Score. Jason Mohammad presents a round-up of this afternoon's results from the Premier League, Football League and Scotland.
5.20 Now You See It. Franz Harary is wrapped in cling-film and challenged to escape an exploding building.
5.50 BBC News.
6.00 Midlands Today; Weather.
6.10 Can't Touch This. A karate instructor, a would-be Red Coat, and a baker from Armagh are among those battling their way through prize-filled obstacle course this week.
7.00 The Voice UK. This year's contest draws to a close as the four finalists battle it out to win the approval of viewers at home, and claim the title of The Voice UK 2016. Last in the series.
9.00 Casualty. Jacob enlists an unlikely ally to help him track down a dangerous drug dealer, and Big Mac becomes increasingly reliant on painkillers. Medical drama, starring Charles Venn.
9.50 The National Lottery Live. The all-important winning numbers are revealed.
10.00 BBC News; Weather.
10.20 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including West Ham United v Arsenal at Upton Park and Crystal Palace v Norwich City at Selhurst Park; **National Lottery Update.**
11.45 FILM: Deja Vu (2006). A federal agent uses a top-secret device that allows him see into the past to prevent a bombing taking place. Sci-fi thriller, starring Denzel Washington and Paula Patton.
1.40 Weather for the Week Ahead.
1.45 BBC News.

BBC2

6.25 FILM: Sister Kenny (1946). A nurse discovers a treatment for polio, but struggles to convince the medical establishment that it will work. Fact-based drama, starring Rosalind Russell and Alexander Knox.
8.20 FILM: Goodbye, Mr Chips (1939). A Latin teacher falls in love with a woman he meets on a walking holiday and is forced to face the horrors of the First World War. Period drama, with Robert Donat and Greer Garson.
10.10 Homes Under the Hammer. Developers Lucy Alexander and Martin Roberts explore properties about to be auctioned in Kent, the north of England and the Midlands. (R)
11.10 Natural World. The life of an orphaned gorilla who became the leader of his troop. (R)
12.00 Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul. The chef's gastronomic road trip brings him to northern Greece where he enjoys traditional dishes including veal stifado and kotopita – the best chicken pie Rick has ever tasted. (R)
1.00 FILM: Henry V (1989). The English king leads his armies into battle to reclaim control of France. Adaptation of Shakespeare's historical play, directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh. With Derek Jacobi.
3.15 Flog It! From Haddon Hall in Derbyshire.
4.00 Bake Off: Creme de la Creme. Members of the British Armed Forces, chefs from a London hotel and the only all-women team in the competition attempt to land a place in the semi-final. Tom Kerridge presents. (R)
5.00 World's Weirdest Events. Chris Packham discovers the cause of mysterious holes in the Russian tundra, finds an underwater lake and meets the creator of a cannon especially for salvo. Last in the series. (R)
6.00 Tribes, Predators & Me. Gordon Buchanan travels to Papua New Guinea, where he meets a tribe that lives alongside crocodiles and is taught to hunt the predators with his bare hands. Last in the series. (R)
7.00 Dad's Army. Corporal Jones misplaces £500 donated by local shopkeepers to provide a new canteen for servicemen, so the platoon tries to help him remember where he put it. (R)
7.30 Golf: The Masters Live. Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the third day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year continues. Subsequent programmes subject to change.
12.00 FILM: The Mummy (1959). An ancient Egyptian priest returns to life to kill those who have desecrated the 4,000-year-old sacred tomb of a princess. Hammer horror, starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee.
1.25 FILM: Stark Raving Mad (2002). A man saddled with his late brother's debts comes up with a scheme to rob a bank – but nothing goes according to plan. Comedy, starring Seann William Scott.
3.00 This Is BBC2.

ITV

6.00 Scrambled: Bottom Knocker Street. (R)
6.15 Scrambled: Bottom Knocker Street. (R)
6.25 Scrambled: Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R)
6.35 Scrambled: Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R)
6.45 Scrambled: Signed Stories. (R)
6.50 Scrambled: Sooty. (R)
7.05 Scrambled: Super 4. (R)
7.15 Scrambled: Looped. (R)
7.30 Scrambled: Scrambled!
7.35 Scrambled: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R)
7.50 Scrambled: Horrid Henry. (R)
8.10 Scrambled: Nerds & Monsters. (R)
8.30 Scrambled: Thunderbirds Are Go. (R)
9.05 Scrambled: The Tom & Jerry Show. (R)
9.25 Murder, She Wrote. An opera singer is accused of murder. (R)
10.15 Murder, She Wrote. Jessica is invited to the tropical retreat of a multi-millionaire. (R)
11.15 The Jeremy Kyle Show. Guests air their differences. (R)
12.15 ITV News and Weather; Weather.
12.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. Guests air their differences. (R)
1.25 Judge Rinder. Real-life cases in a studio courtroom. (R)
2.25 The Chase. Quiz show, hosted by Bradley Walsh. (R)
3.25 FILM: Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang (2010). Fantasy comedy, starring Emma Thompson.
5.30 ITV News Central; Weather.
5.45 ITV News and Weather.
6.00 You've Been Framed! XXL. Harry Hill presents an extra-large edition of the show, revisiting some of the best mishaps, hijinks and side-splitting disasters captured on video by intrepid viewers.
7.00 Britain's Got Talent. New series. Judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and David Walliams take up their places on the judges' panel as the nationwide talent show returns for its tenth series.
8.25 You're Back in the Room. Coronation Street stars Antony Cotton and Jennie McAlpine join Phillip Schofield and Keith Barry as five hypnotised strangers team up to win up to £25,000. Last in the series.
9.25 FILM: The Fast and the Furious (2001). An undercover cop infiltrates the world of illegal street racing in search of a hijacking ring, but starts to question his loyalties. Thriller, starring Vin Diesel and Paul Walker.
10.25 ITV News and Weather; Weather.
10.40 FILM: The Fast and the Furious (2001). Concludes.
11.40 The Cube. Derry-Londonderry radiographer Lindsey is determined to stay calm under pressure, followed by Yorkshireman Keith – the oldest person to have appeared on the show. (R)
12.40 Jackpot247.
3.00 Murder, She Wrote. (R)
3.50 ITV Nightscreen.

Channel 4

6.15 How I Met Your Mother. The friends undergo health checks. (R)
6.40 How I Met Your Mother. Marshall quits his job to volunteer for an environmental group. (R)
7.05 Freeride World Tour. A round-up of action from Alaska, USA.
7.30 Tarawera Ultra Marathon. Action from the endurance event from Rotorua to Kawerau in New Zealand.
7.55 Everybody Loves Raymond. Robert bumps into his ex-wife. (R)
8.25 Everybody Loves Raymond. Part one of two. Marie surprises the family. (R)
9.00 The Grand National Morning Line. A look ahead to the Grand National, which takes place this afternoon at Aintree.
11.00 Weekend Brunch – Grand National Day. A special race-day extended edition of the weekend chat show.
2.00 The Grand National Live from Aintree. Including the 15.15 Crabbie's Grand National Steeple Chase (4m 2 1/2f).
6.30 Speed with Guy Martin. The motorcycle fan sets out to build the world's fastest soapbox racer in an attempt to set a new speed record using just the pull of gravity and a tarmac road. Last in the series. (R)
7.30 Channel 4 News.
8.00 FILM: Johnny English Reborn (2011). A bumbling former secret agent is lured out of seclusion to foil an attempt to assassinate the premier of China. Spy comedy sequel, starring Rowan Atkinson and Gillian Anderson.
10.00 FILM: Die Hard (1988). A New York cop battles armed men who have taken over a Los Angeles skyscraper where his wife is working on Christmas Eve. Action thriller, starring Bruce Willis and Alan Rickman.
12.35 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. The chef tries to help Sabatiello's, an Italian restaurant in Stamford, Connecticut, where the owner's fiery temper upsets the staff and has left him more than \$1 million in debt. (R)
1.30 Hollyoaks. Omnibus. Nancy finds a bag of cash in the glove compartment of Darren's car, and accuses him of gambling again. Meanwhile, Lindsey is annoyed by Esther, Tegan and Celine's protest. (R)
3.35 Hugh's 3 Good Things: Best Bites. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and guests prepare simple rice dishes. (R)
3.45 Location, Location, Location. Kirstie Allsopp and Phil Spencer use their property know-how to help two couples who are looking to relocate to the countryside of either Kent or neighbouring East Sussex. (R)
4.40 Kirstie's Vintage Gems. Kirstie Allsopp helps father Rich Clarke redecorate his daughters' bedroom. (R)
4.55 Selling Houses with Amanda Lamb. Three homeowners inspect rival vendors' homes for decor inspiration. In Cardiff, a couple add glamour to their 1930s house to appeal to buyers Ellery and Christian. Previously seen on More4.
5.50 How I Met Your Mother. (R)

Channel 5

6.00 Milkshake! Peppa Pig
6.05 Bananas in Pyjamas 6.15 Angelina Ballerina
6.30 Bob the Builder 6.45 Ticky Toc
6.55 Zack and Quack 7.05 Roobarb and Custard Too 7.15 Make Way for Noddy 7.25 Paw Patrol 7.40 Little Princess 7.50 Pip Ahoy! 8.05 Blaze and the Monster Machines 8.30 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom 8.45 Wanda and the Alien
8.55 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.
9.30 The Saturday Show Live.
11.30 Police Interceptors: Under Attack. (R)
12.25 Police Interceptors: Dog Squad. Police dog team in the Cleveland and Durham specialist operations unit. (R)
1.20 Police Interceptors: Deadly Pursuits. A collection of the most extreme chases officers have been involved in. (R)
2.20 GPs: Behind Closed Doors. The doctors are faced with depression and alcohol abuse. (R)
3.20 GPs: Behind Closed Doors. The doctors must deal with the subject of bereavement. (R)
4.15 GPs: Behind Closed Doors. The doctors deal with emergency situations. (R)
5.10 GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R)
6.05 NCIS: Los Angeles. A thief plans to steal an antique vase from a naval base.
7.00 NCIS: New Orleans. An accountant willing to give evidence against a weapons trafficker is killed before he can testify, and Pride resolves to ensure another witness does not meet the same fate.
8.00 NCIS. The team investigates the cause of a hit-and-run incident in which a Petty Officer has been killed. Meanwhile, Gibbs works to clear a Navy Hospital Corpsman.
8.55 5 News Weekend.
9.00 The Championship: Football League Tonight. Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the weekend's matches from the Championship, including Burnley v Leeds United and Middlesbrough v Preston North End.
10.00 Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. A round-up of the latest matches in League One and League Two, including Scunthorpe United v Burton Albion, Wigan Athletic v Coventry City and Northampton Town v Bristol Rovers.
10.30 NCIS. A US Navy captain is held hostage in his own office while his wife and blind daughter are abducted, and the kidnappers try to extort a large sum of money from him for their release. (R)
11.25 NCIS. Part one of two. The team reels in the wake of the terrorist attack, but tries to avenge Kate's death by collecting as much information as possible on Ari. (R)
12.15 SuperCasino.
3.10 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. (R)
4.00 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. (R)
4.40 Divine Designs. (R)
5.05 HouseBusters. (R)
5.30 Access. (R)
5.45 Angels of Jarm. (R)
5.50 Angels of Jarm. (R)

**Antiques Roadshow**

8pm

Fiona Bruce and the team visit Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Finds brought in to be valued include some jewellery from the art deco era, a painting by artistic group the Glasgow Girls, and an ugly family heirloom that turns out to have been made by a very important historical figure.

**Live Gymnastics: British Championships**

2.50pm

Coverage of the third and final day of the Artistic Gymnastics British Championships from the Echo Arena in Liverpool. The apparatus finals conclude with the men's and women's floor and vault, the men's pommel horse and the women's beam and uneven bars.

**The Chase Celebrity Special**

7pm

Bradley Walsh presents as EastEnders star Charlie Brooks, paralympian Richard Whitehead, comedian Shappi Khorsandi and presenter David Dickinson pit their wits against ruthless quiz genius the Chaser in the hope of winning a potential prize pot worth thousands of pounds.

**Indian Summers**

9pm

A badly burned Lord Hawthorne demands Adam be arrested for the attack against him. Ralph and Cynthia try to find a way to protect the boy, when everyone's lives are thrown into chaos as a devastating earthquake strikes Simla. In the ensuing chaos, Ralph discovers a secret.

**Penn & Teller: Fool Us in Vegas**

8pm

This week's acts include a horrifying performance using a needle and thread. There are also some unusual card tricks – one involving invisible cards, and another where no card is selected. Penn and Teller close the show by revealing how a classic illusion is performed.

BBC1

- 6.00 Breakfast.**
- 7.30 Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including West Ham United v Arsenal at Upton Park and Crystal Palace v Norwich City at Selhurst Park. (R)
- 9.00 The Andrew Marr Show.**
- 10.00 The Big Questions.** Nicky Campbell presents a debate from Manor CE Academy, York, in which academics discuss whether the works of Shakespeare reveal more about human nature than the Bible.
- 11.00 Sunday Politics West Midlands.** The week's events at Westminster, presented by Andrew Neil. Including a regional round-up.
- 12.15 Bargain Hunt.** From Horncastle, Lincolnshire. (R)
- 1.00 BBC News;** Weather.
- 1.15 Homes Under the Hammer.** Properties in Devon, Kent and Tyne and Wear. (R)
- 2.15 Secret Britain.** Exploring Kent. (R)
- 3.15 Escape to the Country.** A couple who want to return to their Welsh roots. (R)
- 4.00 Points of View.** Viewers' comments.
- 4.15 Songs of Praise.** Six more choirs compete for a place in the Senior School Choir of the Year.
- 5.00 Life in the Air.** Bats, birds and flying insects.
- 6.00 Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army and Me.** Paul reads a Bible story to a room full of children, and gets a glimpse of the future when he tries on an age simulation suit to experience the physical demands of growing old.
- BBC News.**
- 6.50 Midlands Today;** Weather.
- 7.00 Countryside.** John Craven follows LS Lowry's journeys around Northumberland. Ellie Harrison investigates how to conserve moorland, and Charlotte Smith reports on domestic violence in rural areas. Including Weather For The Week Ahead.
- 8.00 Antiques Roadshow.** Fiona Bruce and the team visit Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, where they value an ugly family heirloom that turns out to have an important heritage – and a surprising value.
- 9.00 Undercover.** Maya threatens to expose secrets in the establishment, while Nick is consumed with guilt as he recalls his time as an undercover police officer and his first meeting with his wife.
- BBC News.**
- 10.20 Midlands Today;** Weather.
- 10.30 Match of the Day 2.** Highlights of the latest Premier League matches, featuring Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester United, Sunderland v Leicester City and Liverpool v Stoke City.
- 11.40 FILM:** *The Hot Chick* (2002). A pretty crook and a snooty cheerleader swap bodies, leaving the thief free to indulge in a crime spree while posing as a go-go dancer. Comedy, with Rob Schneider and Rachel McAdams.
- 1.15 Weather for the Week Ahead.**
- BBC News.**

BBC2

- 6.15 Great British Garden Revival.** Charlie Dimmock urges gardeners to consider installing ponds, while Chris Beardshaw makes the case for stumperies. (R)
- 7.15 This Farming Life.** Christmas is looming, and in Inverness, Martin Irvine's sheds are now full of cows and their newborn calves. One was born prematurely, so he has to make some difficult decisions. (R)
- 8.15 An Island Parish.** Frank Strang prepares for Shetland's biggest music festival. (R)
- 8.45 The Beechgrove Garden.** Carole Baxter helps a novice transform his garden on a budget.
- 9.15 Countryfile.** An episode devoted to cattle, in which Matt Baker meets a beef farmer who got into the business after an online fundraising campaign, and Helen Skelton visits a traditional tannery. (R)
- 10.15 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites.** James Martin presents highlights of the series, recalling his favourite moments from previous years in the kitchen.
- 11.45 The Best Dishes Ever.** (R)
- 12.15 MOTD2 Extra.** Football discussion with the Match of the Day team.
- 1.00 Triathlon.** Jonathan Edwards presents highlights of the second round of the ITU World Triathlon Series from Gold Coast in Australia, featuring the men's and women's races.
- 2.50 Live Gymnastics: British Championships.** Matt Baker introduces coverage of the third and final day of the Artistic Gymnastics British Championships from the Echo Arena in Liverpool.
- 5.00 The Hairy Bikers' Northern Exposure.** Si King and Dave Myers take DNA tests to find out if they have any Viking ancestry. Last in the series. (R)
- 6.00 Great British Railway Journeys.** Michael Portillo travels from Newcastle to Lindisfarne, where he explores the lime kilns and finds out how Christianity spread from there across northern England in the 7th century. (R)
- 6.30 Golf: The Masters Live.** Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the fourth and final day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year reaches a conclusion. Subsequent programmes subject to change.
- 12.00 The People v OJ Simpson: American Crime Story.** Months of isolation has caused frustration among the jury members and there are heated exchanges in their hotel, while the DNA evidence troubles Robert Kardashian. (R)
- 12.40 Sign Zone: Countryside.** An episode devoted to cattle, in which Matt Baker meets a beef farmer who got into the business after an online fundraising campaign, and Helen Skelton visits a traditional tannery. (R)
- 1.35 Sign Zone: Holy City.** When Jason arrives on AAU with his seriously ill carer Alan, Serena's personal involvement affects her professional judgement. (R)
- 2.35 This Is BBC2.**

ITV

- 6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street 6.15** Bottom Knocker Street 6.25 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures 6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures 6.45 Signed Stories: Share a Story 6.50 Sooty 7.05 Super 4 7.15 Looped
- 7.30 Scrambled!** Scrambled! Two hours of children's fun.
- 7.35 Scrambled!** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. Chaotic cartoon capers, voiced by Rowan Atkinson. (R)
- 7.50 Scrambled!** Horrid Henry. Cartoon about a mischievous youngster. (R)
- 8.10 Scrambled!** Nerds & Monsters. Animated comedy. (R)
- 8.30 Scrambled!** Teen Titans Go! The teenage superheroes fight to save the world. (R)
- 9.05 Scrambled!** The Tom & Jerry Show. Cat and mouse adventures. (R)
- 9.25 ITV News.**
- 9.30 Murder, She Wrote.** Jessica helps a homicide detective. (R)
- 10.25 Murder, She Wrote.** An election campaign ends in murder. (R)
- 11.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** Guests air their differences. (R)
- 12.30 ITV News and Weather;** Weather.
- 12.45 River Monsters.** A fish is suspected of killing a honeymooning bride in Colombia. (R)
- 1.45 Big Star's Little Star.** With Matthew Wolfenden, Nina Hossain and David Haye. Last in the series. (R)
- 2.50 Britain's Got Talent.** The nationwide talent show returns for its tenth series. (R)
- 4.10 FILM: Licence to Kill** (1989). James Bond spy thriller, starring Timothy Dalton.
- 6.40 ITV News Central;** Weather.
- 6.45 ITV News and Weather.**
- 7.00 The Chase Celebrity Special.** Charlie Brooks, Richard Whitehead, Shappi Khorsandi and David Dickinson work as a team to take on a quiz genius and secure a cash prize for charity. Presented by Bradley Walsh.
- 8.00 The Durrells.** Larry falls dangerously ill, and Theo and his neighbour put their rudimentary medical skills to the task of saving him. Spiros brings good news from a surprising source.
- 9.00 Home Fires.** Laura is publicly disgraced when news of the Bowers' divorce hits the papers. Pat is tempted by her feelings for Marek while Bob is in hospital, and Steph awaits Stan's return home.
- 10.05 ITV News and Weather;** Weather.
- 10.20 100 Year Old Drivers.** On the road with some of Britain's oldest motorists, including a bomber command veteran who drives to the betting shop every day and a 93-year-old preparing for a retest. (R)
- 11.20 Murder, She Wrote.** Jessica visits a friend's Arizona ranch – but as soon as she arrives, the community is plunged into disarray by a local psychic's sinister predictions. Starring Angela Lansbury. (R)
- 12.15 Jackpot247.** Interactive gaming. (ITV Nightscreen.)
- 3.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R)
- 5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R)

Channel 4

- 6.15 How I Met Your Mother.** Marshall takes Zoey's side in the argument about the Arcadian. (R)
- 6.40 Everybody Loves Raymond.** Part two of two. Robert falls in love. (R)
- 7.05 Everybody Loves Raymond.** Marie and Frank crash their car into Ray's house. (R)
- 7.30 Everybody Loves Raymond.** Robert tells Amy about Joanne. (R)
- 7.55 Everybody Loves Raymond.** Ray accidentally kills Ally's hamster. (R)
- 8.25 Frasier.** Everyone is feeling grumpy on Martin's birthday. (R)
- 9.00 Frasier.** A new manager joins the radio station. (R)
- 9.30 Sunday Brunch.** Featuring the stars of Made in Chelsea.
- 12.30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces.** Featuring a farmer's project to build a traditional Highland bothy. (R)
- 1.30 The Big Bang Theory.** Sheldon uses his holidays to help Amy in her biology lab. (R)
- 2.00 The Big Bang Theory.** Sheldon and Kripke battle it out to get Professor Rothman's vacant corner office. (R)
- 2.30 FILM: Bridge to Terabithia** (2007). Drama, starring Josh Hutcherson.
- 4.25 FILM: Rango** (2011). Premiere. Oscar-winning animated comedy, with the voice of Johnny Depp.
- 6.30 Channel 4 News.**
- 7.00 The Secret Life of the Zoo.** Black rhino Kitani is introduced to her mate Magadi, but Chester Zoo keeper Babs is concerned that Kitani may struggle to defend herself. Last in the series. (R)
- 8.00 Hidden Britain by Drone.** Part one of two. Tony Robinson presents aerial footage of areas of Britain that are off limits to the public, including military installations and billionaires' private estates.
- 9.00 Indian Summers.** A badly burned Lord Hawthorne demands Adam be arrested for the attack against him. As Ralph and Cynthia try to find a way to protect him, Simla is devastated by an earthquake.
- 10.00 Gogglebox.** Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)
- 11.05 FILM: Insidious: Chapter 2** (2013). A couple previously tormented by paranormal activity investigate the dark secrets connecting them to the spirit world. Horror sequel, starring Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne.
- 1.05 Embarrassing Bodies Down Under.** A man with Peyronie's disease seeks advice in Dandenong, Victoria. (R)
- 2.00 The People Next Door.** Drama, starring Joanna Horton. (R)
- 2.55 Come Dine with Me.** A mobile hairdresser hosts the first dinner party in Barnsley. (R)
- 3.20 Come Dine with Me.** (R)
- 3.45 Come Dine with Me.** (R)
- 4.10 Come Dine with Me.** Milly Johnson hosts the penultimate dinner party in Barnsley. (R)
- 4.40 Come Dine with Me.** (R)
- 5.05 Location, Location, Location.** House-hunting in Edinburgh. (R)

Channel 5

- 6.00 Milkshake!** Peppa Pig 6.05 Bananas in Pyjamas 6.20 Angelina Ballerina 6.30 Bob the Builder 6.45 Tictoc Toc 6.55 Zack and Quack 7.05 Roobarb and Custard Too 7.15 Make Way for Noddy 7.25 Paw Patrol 7.40 Little Princess 7.55 Pip Ahoy! 8.10 Blaze and the Monster Machines 8.40 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom 8.50 Wanda and the Alien 9.05 Toby's Travelling Circus 9.15 Jelly Jamm 9.30 Lazy Town 9.55 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The Shredder experiments on the Mutanimals.
- 10.30 The Championship: Football League Tonight.** Highlights and all the goals from the Championship. (R)
- 11.30 Goal Rush: Football League Tonight.** A round-up of all the goals from League One and League Two. (R)
- 12.00 The Gadget Show.** The latest technology designed to outfox burglars. (R)
- 1.00 Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild UK.** A couple who swapped city life for a smallholding in Exmoor National Park. (R)
- 2.00 FILM: Eight Below** (2006). Disney canine adventure, starring Paul Walker.
- 4.20 FILM: The Haunted Mansion** (2003). An estate agent takes his family to look round an isolated mansion, but the resident ghosts are not pleased to see the visitors. Comedy, starring Eddie Murphy and Terence Stamp.
- 6.00 Now That's Funny!** A collection of internet-sourced videos with a family friendly hook, featuring failed celebrations and dinosaur attacks. Last in the series.
- 7.00 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** Agents Paul and Steve face a moral dilemma in South London, when they find out the tenant they have been instructed to evict is on his way to a funeral. (R)
- 8.00 Penn & Teller: Fool Us in Vegas.** This week's acts include a horrifying performance using a needle and thread, some unusual card tricks, and a mentalist illusion using a phone book and a sword.
- 8.55 5 News Weekend.**
- 9.00 FILM: The Town** (2010). Premiere. A bank robber falls in love with a woman he took host, risking the fury of his partner in crime. Drama, directed by and starring Ben Affleck. With Rebecca Hall. Edited for language.
- 11.25 FILM: Hancock** (2008). A PR executive decides to transform the image of a drunken superhero whose careless crime-fighting often does more harm than good. Comedy, starring Will Smith and Charlize Theron.
- 1.10 SuperCasino.** Live interactive gaming. (The Tube: Going Underground.) Passengers at Cannon Street have to be redirected after a man is taken ill. (R)
- 4.00 Wildlife SOS.** The work of an animal sanctuary. (R)
- 4.25 Wildlife SOS.** The work of an animal sanctuary. (R)
- 4.50 Great Artists.** Peter Paul Rubens. (R)
- 5.15 Divine Designs.** Humorous gargoyles and sombre stained-glass windows. (R)

Choose the mower that is right for your garden

There are so many lawnmowers on the market these days – rotary and cylinder, corded electric, cordless petrol, battery-powered and state-of-the-art robotic types. But which one is right for your budget, and right for your lawn?

Lawnmower prices range from under £100 to thousands for elaborate sit-on types, but expect to pay at least a few hundred if you have a fair-sized lawn and want something that will last.

Petrol, corded electric or battery are the main options and each has its own pros and cons.

In our environmentally-conscious world, battery-powered options – once dismissed by lawn lovers because of the batteries' dubious staying power and need to replace them after a winter in storage – have become more sophisticated as lithium-ion batteries don't lose power like the old ones.

Bosch stopped manufacturing petrol mowers in 2010 to go eco-friendly and has long been extolling the virtues of lithium-ion batteries which, it claims, perform as petrol equivalents but with low noise, low vibrations and savings on running costs. Battery-operated mowers are generally lighter machines, don't pump out carbon monoxide and are much quieter than their petrol counterparts.

Other than following battery care instructions and annually sharpening the blades, cordless mowers need no other kind of maintenance.

BATTERY POWER

The downsides of battery mowers are that you have to remember to recharge the batteries and they won't stripe your lawn as effectively as a heavier machine.

The Bosch Rotak 43 LI Ergoflex cordless lawnmower (£469.99, shop.bosch-do-it.com) can give an excellent cut for 40 minutes on one charge. It has a charge time of 140 minutes.

The new EGO Power+ lawnmower (£499, www.egopowerplus.co.uk) whispers in at 83 decibels, quieter than a food blender. On an average lawn on flat ground, the battery would last around 45 minutes and can recharge in 30.

PETROL POWER

Petrol-driven motors may be better for bigger lawns and where you need plenty of power on slopes or uneven surfaces. Users also won't encounter the cumbersome cables of electric models. There are push and self-propelled varieties with having throttle control.

Petrol mowers give a good striped effect as they are heavier and, although they need servicing, it could be argued that well-maintained, good quality petrol mower will outlast most electric ones. The Mountfield SP454 self-propelled petrol lawnmower (£304, B&Q, www.diy.com) is a great option for lawns up to 1500m squared.

ELECTRIC POWER

A corded electric mower is fine for a smaller suburban garden, if you're not bothered about keeping the cable out of the way of the blades.

Electric 'hover' mowers are the cheapest, but can produce a disappointing finish, often require a spanner to adjust the mowing height and don't always collect grass efficiently.

Ultimately, your choice should depend on your lawn type and size. If you have a small or medium-sized lawn, a battery-operated mower or light electric type should be fine. The Bosch 32R Corded Lawnmower (£78.92, Homebase, www.homebase.co.uk) is lightweight and perfect for smaller lawns.

CYLINDER OR ROTARY?

Cylinder mowers are for the lawn perfectionist who wants a finer cut and bowling green finish. They are ideal for flat lawns and short grass, but struggle with long or wet grass. If you want the exercise, opt for a push variety. If you don't, self-propelled is the way to go.

Rotary mowers are better all-rounders, cut better in wet or long grass and cope well with uneven surfaces. Their blades can be easily changed. Try the Mac Allister 1300W Rotary Lawnmower (£84, B&Q, www.diy.com) – a great all-rounder for gardens of a good size.

NEW ALTERNATIVES

Some gardeners might prefer to sink a gin and tonic on the patio while watching the lawn being mown by a robotic device such as Robomow, which starts at an eye-popping £1,199 for the RC304, increasing to £2,799 for the upgraded RS635 model, available from selected dealers nationwide (robomow.com).



Potted chillies can make an attractive addition to a patio

It's time to begin sowing your peppers and tomatoes

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT – Growing Chillies

You might be surprised to know that chillies can be trained easily into neat bushy plants which will give you enough fruits to keep you going for some time and deserve a place on the patio.

Start them off indoors by sowing two seeds into a 9cm pot and placing it on a heated propagator or warm windowsill, where you can maintain a constant temperature of 20C.

If both seeds germinate, remove the weaker one and gradually reduce the temperature to a minimum of 14C at night.

When the plant fills its space, pot it on into a two-litre pot of multipurpose compost and in June, place it in its final resting place in a five litre pot in a sheltered spot on the patio.

When the plant is 20cm high, pinch out the growing tip to encourage bushiness. Water frequently on hot days during the summer and feed with a tomato fertiliser when the fruits start to form.

They're ready for picking when they are ripe

but the skin is still smooth. Chillies will store well for a couple of weeks in the fridge or longer in the freezer.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

1. Plant container-grown outdoor grape vines
2. Divide hostas before they come into leaf
3. When space becomes available in the greenhouse, pot up cuttings of tender perennials taken last summer and at the beginning of this year
4. Plant roses in heavy soils or in cold areas
5. Protect new growth on lilies, delphiniums and any other plants affected by slugs and snails
6. Remove dead leaves from around the basal rosettes of alpine plants to prevent rotting
7. Plant herbaceous perennials, including geranium, astrantia and Oriental poppies
8. Sow sweet peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, celery, salads and globe artichokes in a frost-free greenhouse
9. Remove reverted green shoots on hardy variegated evergreens to prevent reverision
10. Cut off the top rosette of leaves from leggy stems of Mahonia x media cultivars to encourage branching

Spare a thought and give support for garden hosts

ROSS UNDERWOOD



Head Gardener at Hodnet Hall

SPARE A thought for those harried and wild eyed folks you might see dashing around the garden centre at this time who have bravely undertaken to open their gardens to the public.

Easter or the start of April is the traditional start of the garden open season.

Opening a garden has become an increasingly popular means of raising money for charity or simply for the upkeep of the garden.

No longer is it the preserve of those with rolling acres to display but more and more people with average-sized gardens are putting out the signs and firing up the tea urn.

Whether you have done it a hundred times or for the first time, well done!

For the garden visitor it is great opportunity to peek behind the hedges and fences of normally private preserves and see plants, some rare, many familiar, and more importantly to see how they have been used.

For the person opening the garden it can be a stressful experience.

Naturally opening a garden means opening it to the judgement of others.

You naturally want it to be right but are not sure just what 'right' constitutes.

This is often some hazily defined feeling that the weather and the plants have all come together to harmonise.

In the lead-up to the big day theatre can be a lot of glances cast at the skies to see if rain will stop the lawn being mowed or if there will be enough sun to bring out the colours of the flowers or woe of woes if the prised patch of snowdrops or crocus will have been devoured by the birds.

There will often be hurried trips to the garden centre to snaffle up anything that might be in flower.

Spare a thought for these brave people who are offering up something with which they are emotionally engaged for you to enjoy with.

Even better spare your time and the modest entrance fee they might be asking for.

It is not only gardeners who are keeping an eye on the weather, plants are, metaphorically, doing the same as pollination begins



It is not only gardeners who are keeping an eye on the weather, plants are, metaphorically, doing the same as pollination begins



It takes a lot of effort, from gardeners and plants, to get best results



Now is the perfect time to pay a visit to the gardens

Much of this reproduction remains unnoticed because without the need to flaunt themselves the plants that rely on wind pollination eschew the superfluous production of nectar and flowers.

In fact what flowers they do produce are tiny and held in catkins or pedicels.

Nearly all conifers employ this method of reproduction.

If you are lucky enough to have a majestic yew or a yew hedge in the garden or around you can often see clouds of pollen being dispersed.

These pollen grains are tiny, about half the diameter of a human hair.

On trees such as oaks, ashes and Cer-

cidiphyllum the pollen dispersal is accomplished before the leaves emerge which saves energy and let's the wind get to the all important pollen bearing structures without being deflected.

This is a risky strategy, trusting the survival of your genetic material to the capricious spring weather especially as pollen from wind pollinated plants is often less viable over longer distances.

These plants often compensate for this by producing huge quantities of pollen, billions of grains.

So when you go out and visit a garden

and as you drop your money in the entrance box remember that both the owners and the plants are risking something!

The gardens at Hodnet Hall are open to visitors from midday through to 5pm on Sundays and bank holiday Mondays until September 27. Admission costs £6.50 adults and children £1. Dogs are welcome on leads.

A plant fair will be held on June 4 and 5.

The garden is open for the National Garden Scheme on June 12.

The Garden Restaurant serves light refreshments. For group visits contact the secretary on (01630) 685786.

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Does it make a mess?

I very rarely make a mess, I always take my time to keep the mess to a minimum. There is little or no dust if your chimney is swept on a regular basis.

How much will it cost?

The cost will depend on the type of appliance, the chimney height and size and when you last had it swept. The average cost is just £40. If you are comparing my price with other chimney sweeps, make sure you are comparing like for like.

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Verso putting safety first

Toyota's flexible, family-friendly Verso MPV has been given a substantial safety upgrade with a package of Toyota Safety Sense active safety and driver assistance features being added to the standard specification of every model.

It's part of a refresh for 2016 that includes a revised grade structure, new alloy wheel designs and a clutch of detail changes in the cabin. Prices start at £18,120.

Verso's Toyota Safety Sense benefits include a pre-collision system that recognises an imminent impact with a vehicle ahead, triggering a warning to the driver and priming the brakes for extra stopping power the moment the brake pedal is pressed. If the driver fails to respond, autonomous emergency braking is activated, automatically

slowing the vehicle to reduce the force of any impact.

Verso further gains automatic high beam, which maintains excellent forward visibility when driving at night. It detects both the headlights of oncoming vehicles, and the tail lights of vehicles ahead, automatically switching between high and low beams to avoid dazzling other drivers.

The third Toyota Safety Sense element for Verso is lane departure alert. This monitors lane markings on the road and helps prevent accidents and head-on collisions caused by a vehicle drifting out of its lane. If the vehicle starts to deviate from its lane without the turn indicators being used, the system alerts the driver with visual and audible warnings.

These features are in addition to Verso's proven active and passive safety provisions, from its strong body construction, designed to absorb and channel impact forces away from the cabin, to the seven airbags, ABS, emergency brakeforce distribution, brake assist, traction control and vehicle stability control that all come as standard.

Verso is available in a new Design trim, alongside the established Active, Icon and Excel specifications.

Available with the 1.8-litre Valvematic petrol engine with automatic transmission and the 1.6-litre D-4D diesel, it comes with the Toyota Touch 2 with Go multimedia system with satellite navigation and reversing camera, rear privacy glass and a (fixed) panoramic roof. These are in addition to the standard features of Icon grade, including DAB tuner, dusk-sensing headlights, cruise control, automatic air conditioning, six-speaker audio and power windows front and rear.

At the top of the range, Excel models gain the panoramic roof, rain-sensing wipers, au-



**Family-friendly Verso
MPV has been given a
substantial safety upgrade
with a package of Toyota
Safety Sense active safety
and driver assistance
features**

to-dimming rear-view mirror, high-intensity discharge headlights and combination leather and cloth upholstery.

Icon, Design and Excel versions of Verso can be specified with an optional, high-value family pack that provides two rear seatback screens with integrated DVD players and leather seat upholstery (first and second row seats) for £1,995. Other entertainment system combinations are available as stand-alone options, including permutations of master and slave DVD screens and single or double iPad docks.

New alloy wheel designs feature on the 2016 Verso – 16-inch for Icon, 17-inch for Design and 17-inch with a double-spoke

arrangement for Excel, with an anthracite dark grey finish. The colour choices include a new platinum bronze shade.

In the cabin there is a new leather-trimmed steering wheel with integrated switches for hands-free phone use and other functions, a new gear shift design and a new-look cloth upholstery for Icon and Design models. To free up more boot space, the tyre repair kit (when specified) has been relocated to the underfloor storage compartment behind the driver's seat.

The Toyota Touch 2 system adopts a larger, seven-inch display and, where sat nav is specified, an improved interface for easier, more intuitive operation.



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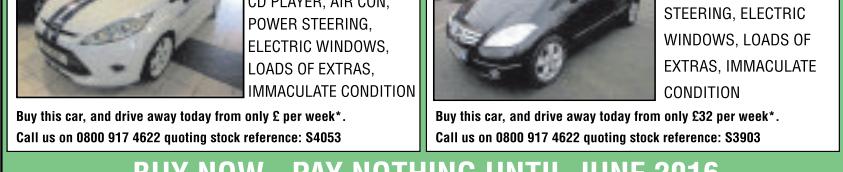
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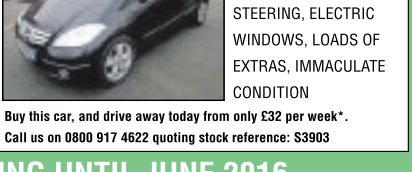
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A perfect package in executive class

By John Griffiths

Talk Tesla and almost immediately the conversation turns to all things technical, from computerised controls to battery charging.

But, technical tour de force that the Tesla is, all this techno talk (while interesting itself) is missing the point.

At prices from £58,000 the Model S is actually a genuine competitor for top of the range executive expresses such as the BMW 5 Series and Mercedes E-Class.

It just oozes quality, as one of the roomiest cars in this class – seating five adults in leather and alcantara comfort with not just one but TWO boots for their luggage.

It has the grip and stability of four wheel drive, and its initial acceleration will cause shock and awe even among Ferrari owners.

Yet it's road tax free, subject to the lowest rate of company car tax, and of course you never have to put fuel in it – just a couple of quid to put a couple of hundred miles of electrical charge in the batteries. It's an impressive car, whether you look at it terms of a head-turning premium saloon, the impact on your pocket or your green credentials.

It takes a day or two to get your head around it, of course. The first thing is the utter simplicity of the controls and the strange feeling you get the first couple of times you move off in complete silence.

Charging

Then there's the practical dimension – you do still need to plan your journey with an eye on charging points unless you want to suffer from the electrical vehicle driver phenomenon known as range anxiety.

I have to explain that having the car for just a few days is very different to owning one, in which case you'd also have a dedicated charging box installed at home, to keep the batteries topped up overnight. You can use a standard 13amp domestic plug, but it's a bit of a long drawn out business – you get about 10 miles for every hour of charge.

Better to use one of the chargers at a motorway services or supermarket – there are thousands and more being added every day which charge at a much higher rate. In terms of cost, one company, for example, offers an electronic key card to access their chargers which is free for the first six months and under £8 per month thereafter.

Tesla itself has a network of 'superchargers' which will give up almost maximum range in 20 to 30 minutes. These are strategically sited around the country to allow for long journeys all the way from Exeter in the south to Edinburgh. All charging points are



shown on an internet app called 'zap maps' which not only gives the exact location but also the type of charger and even whether it's in service or not. On a cautionary note, not all are open to the public.

With only a few days of Tesla time, it wasn't practical to apply for a card from one or more of the public site owners, but instead I used zap maps to identify a fast charger at the Valley Hotel in Ironbridge, which cost £2 to plug in and charge the car while I was enjoying lunch inside.

The test car was a P85D, the numbers referring to the 85kW battery which, using the Birmingham supercharger, gave me 225 miles of range. Newer models are available with a 90kW battery, giving up to 340 miles.

The Tesla is a big car, and quite a heavy one, but particularly easy to drive: apart from the steering wheels, foot brake and accelerator the main control is the right hand stalk on the steering wheel which is the 'gear' stick with just forward, neutral and reverse positions. A button on the end engages 'park', eliminating the need for a conventional handbrake and so freeing up extra room between the seats.

In the centre of the dash are a few buttons – heated seats and climate control for example – but above that is the unique, full size computer screen which controls just about everything else on the car. For example, you touch the screen to change from 'sport' to

'insane' mode: aptly named because if you floor the throttle from a standing start you'll be passing 62mph in just 3.1 seconds.

The screen also doubles as a navigation system (supercharger locations are pre-programmed) or a for full internet service where you can google zap maps, or whatever you want. It also controls the charging system, the high quality audio, and telephone connectivity.

The computer system also means your car can receive upgrades and improvements without going anywhere near a dealership: they are just downloaded like a mobile phone app. An example is Tesla's 'Autopilot' system, one of the few optional extras on a car already so highly specified.

All Teslas have an adaptive cruise control – a common feature on premium cars - which controls your speed and, using radar, maintains your distance from the vehicle in front. But Autopilot goes much further and actually takes over the steering, using a series of cameras around the car to keep you in the centre of your lane. If you want to overtake, just flick the right hand indicator and the car moves over to the right hand lane. It is really for motorway use (where there are white lines on both sides) and, for safety's sake, you still have to have your hands loosely on the wheel – if you don't the system switches off with a visible and audio warning.

Four wheel drive and the fact that most of

the car's weight (batteries and engine) are close to the ground make it extremely stable. The car feels slightly heavy to drive, but is still surprisingly agile. It is off course quite too – there's a little rumble from the tyres over some surfaces and some wind noise at speed but so little you probably wouldn't notice it if you were driving an internal combustion engine.

While the Tesla is probably the world's most advanced car, it hasn't sacrificed some traditions when it comes to the sort of comforts drivers of premium cars expected. The smooth, quiet progress, the spacious cabin and the high quality leather, alcantara and chrome are very gentleman's club, with the rather more contemporary carbon fibre additions bringing the mood bang up to date.

It's this combination which makes the Tesla an appealing car: initially a little cynical I came to like the car more and more as the days went by.

It is luxurious, with more room in the back than almost anything short of a Skoda Superb or a stretch limo, it could show a 911 a clean pair of heels and yet its tax-efficiency is about as good as it gets and its fuel (energy) costs are amazingly low, and with a longer range than any other electric vehicle.

It may take you some time to get your head around the Tesla experience, but it is a long way along the road to personal transport of the future.

Intrepid adventurers travel world in Model T

Driving around the world is a serious challenge and not something to be attempted on a whim, but just imagine doing it for charity in a 100-year-old Ford Model T...

Dutch couple Dirk and Trudy Reger have been doing just that since 2012, driving 14,000 miles from their home in Edam to Cape Town in South Africa.

In 2013 they drove a complete route across North America, taking in the USA and Canada in 17,000 miles and 180 days.

This year they plan to start a new leg of their epic journey, through New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia and India, before crossing the Himalayas to China, Mongolia and back through Europe.

The intrepid adventurers, who have owned their 1915 Model T since 1997, have visited and supported various projects run by international children's aid organisation SOS Children's Villages, along the way.

Dirk has previously owned a 1923 Model T and a 1928 Model A, and he's not intimidated by the age of the car.

"In Africa, we had to weld a broken front wheel at the local blacksmith," he said.

"I'm pretty handy, and a screwdriver, hammer, some duct tape, tie wraps and tensioning straps go a long way."

The Regters' Ford Model T is powered by a 3.0-litre petrol engine and remains in the same specification as when it left the factory in 1915, apart from larger tyres for the wooden-spoked wheels, which make the ride 'softer and more bearable' over long journeys.

"On the border of South Africa and Botswana, we met a farmer who had an old Ford Model T in the shed, he gave us the tyre off of it as a gift to help us on our way," Dirk added.

Dangers of using a mobile at the wheel

New data suggests the risk of an accident almost doubles when using a mobile phone at the wheel.

Wunelli, a provider of vehicle telematics for insurance companies, and insurance broker Drivology, gathered data on more than 4,000 drivers over a period of 18 months, including data on journeys made with hands-free and illegal hand-held mobile phone use, with the results suggesting that driver performance is affected in both scenarios.

Hard braking events – G-force sufficient to propel a handbag on to the floor – occur approximately once every 50 miles with an average driver, but Wunelli established that for drivers using a hand-held mobile, these events increase by 75 per cent, and 20 per cent for those using hands-free.

The data also revealed that men are almost twice as likely to use their phone illegally at the wheel, while drivers of either sex between the ages of 25 and 35 most frequently commit this offence.

A majority of illegal phonecalls are made on roads with a speed limit of 40mph or less, where accidents are 11 times more likely to occur compared to motorways.

The data also showed that drivers using a phone illegally tend to drop their speed by a third on average, suggesting a high level of distraction.

Paul Stacy, founding director of Wunelli, said: "Driving a car is the most dangerous activity most people will ever do."

"The fact we all started to use phones in our cars 10 years before the Government in the UK banned use while driving, means we need re-think our attitude to mobile phone use, and mute the mobile when we make a journey."



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Style and performance

By Graham Breeze

Impressed at launch by Suzuki's new Vitara 1.4 Boosterjet I was keen to take a better look and after a week behind the wheel I'm still a fan of this mini Range Rover lookalike.

The new Vitara range arrived in 2015 to replace the popular 4x4 Grand Vitara with the promise of the direct injection four cylinder petrol engine Boostjet to follow.

Now it's here and I don't think you'll be disappointed with the styling and performance, though you may put a question mark over parting company with £20,899.

Since arriving in 1988 the Vitara has been picking up accolades thanks to city styling married to capable on and off-road abilities and now just eight months after the UK launch the S model has been introduced, providing a more sporting and dynamic character to the Vitara line-up.

The biggest change is the arrival of the 1.4-litre petrol engine with the new Boosterjet technology. This 140PS direct injection turbocharged petrol unit takes Suzuki to a new level with torque available from 1,500 rpm, an incredible 41 per cent more than in the 1.6 – that's over 17 per cent more power, yet there's four per cent better fuel economy.

In fact the six-speed manual model on test averaged 52.3mpg on the combined cycle, while producing only 127g/km of emissions.

For the technical reader the Boosterjet engine uses a small displacement, high torque

turbocharger. By controlling the waste gate valve, which closes to create higher boost pressure during heavy load operation, the Boosterjet reduces pumping loss to achieve high levels of power and fuel efficiency.

Suzuki's Allgrip system is standard on the new S range with four driving modes of Auto, Snow, Lock and Sport.

There's also hill hold control, hill descent control and a comprehensive list of safety features including adaptive cruise control, an impact absorbing feature and a full set of airbags.

Best-looking

But it's not all about performance because the Vitara looks the part too. For my mind it's the best-looking Suzuki so far, firmly expressing the company's SUV styling with a solid looking appearance and a roof line that slopes sharply downwards towards the rear.

The unique S-model trim includes gloss black 17 inch alloys, vertical grille design, a rear upper spoiler, silver door mirrors and very neat red interior stitching on instruments, doors and seating.

You also get rear privacy glass, wheel arch extensions, front and rear silver skid pads, silver roof rails, chrome front grille and side trim and sporty aluminium pedals.

Also fitted are childproof rear door locks, a tyre pressure monitor, radar brake support, emergency stop signalling and a flat tyre pair kit, which means no spare.

There's a rear parking camera, front and rear parking sensors, adjustable steering and driver's seat, an easy-to-use information system, keyless entry, DAB radio, SatNav, Bluetooth connectivity and steering wheel audio controls



Suzuki's Allgrip system is standard on the new S range with four driving modes

There is enough room inside for most needs with a 375 litre (13.24 cu.ft) boot which goes up to 710 litres (25.07 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded down.

The towing weight capacity is 1,200 kg (2,645 lb).

At launch I said the Vitara design looked to have been influenced by Range Rover

Evoque, this latest arrival has even more quality but that is reflected in the price tag.

The Boosterjet S was well worth a second look. For a 1.4 you get surprisingly impressive performance and 12 months free road tax though I would expect a spare wheel in a 4x4 not an emergency repair kit.

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Saints are beaten by late goal in real thriller

ST MARTINS 3 TRYSSUL 5

ST MARTINS were left wondering what they failed to take any points in this West Midlands League division one affair against Trysull at Park Hall.

Despite playing some good football, the Saints paid a heavy price for losing the ball on a number of occasions as their visitors struck to return the spoils.

The hosts also hit the woodwork three times in a crazy encounter, that saw Trysull take a fifth minute lead when Daniel Patrick cashed in on a poor back pass.

A minute later, the Saints went close when Callum Bennett headed against the post from a Dan Griffiths cross, but they found themselves two down on 10 minutes after some more slack play saw Jacko Johnson find the net.

Jamie Hands pulled one back from the penalty spot after being brought down in the box, and Shawn Melusi finished off an excellent passing move to make it 2-2.

It looked to be the Shropshire side's game for the taking, but Trysull were back in front when central defender Ben Podmore headed in a corner.

The Saints, however, were playing some slick passing football and more good movement saw Bennett foiled by the woodwork a second time when he shot rattled against the post before rebounding into the goalkeeper's hands.

Trysull then increased their lead when Johnson netted his second of the game when firing over keeper George Austin.

St Martins were back in the hunt with a terrific effort when Bennett crashed home a 20-yarder to reduce the arrears to 4-3 at half-time.

The hosts had plenty of the game in the second period, but could not take advantage as they struck the woodwork for a third time, before Jamie Morgan sealed the Trysull win five minutes from time.

The Saints have four league games remaining, the first being at home to Hereford Lads Club at the Venue Park Hall on Saturday (1.30pm).

South African wicketkeeper is on the way

AN overseas wicketkeeper is set to join Oswestry for the forthcoming season in the Birmingham Cricket League division two.

The Morda Road club are finalising a move for the South African, and hope to complete the deal in the coming week ahead of the new league campaign that gets underway at home to Harborne on Saturday, April 30.

Three players have returned to the club – left arm spinner Charlie Morris, opening bat Scott Hale and all rounder Kevin Evans – while Alex Huxley and Australian wicketkeeper Michael Johnson have left.

The team will be captained by all rounder Jonathan Miles, with Mark Robinson having stepped down as skipper this term.

Worcestershire ace Joe Clarke is not eligible to play for his home town club who have dropped down to division two. Instead, when free of his First Class commitments, he will turn out for division one side Wellington.

Clarke made a positive start to the season, scoring a century for the Pears against Oxford University in a warm-up match.

Oswestry, meanwhile, will be warming up for the new season with friendlies planned in the coming weeks. The first team open with a trip to Shifnal on Saturday, April 16, while the second string are home to Shifnal on the same day.

The following Saturday, the first team host Newport, and the seconds are away to their Shropshire rivals.

The first league action at Morda Road sees the third team entertain Alberbury III in the newly named Shropshire League Sunday division one on Sunday, April 24.

TNS Ladies reserves were 3-1 winners a Brereton Town Ladies in the Staffordshire League

Gulls spark in super win over Flint

A LATE salvo saw Gullsfield get back on track for a top five finish in the Huws Gray Cymru Alliance courtesy of a 3-1 home verdict against Flint Town United.

The Gulls had trailed to a fifth minute opener from Jack Abrahams, but levelled courtesy of newcomer Dave Easthope's second goal in as many league games on 74 minutes.

Adam Jenkins then gave the resolute Clos Mytton the lead with five minutes left as they upped the ante, before Aaron Edwards sealed a timely win moments later.

Lowly LLANFAIR UNITED's big home clash with basement rivals Conwy Borough was postponed due

to a waterlogged pitch.

But they remain two points clear of the relegation places after the three teams below them all lost.

Ten man Caersws crashed 6-1 at home to Cefn Druids, who scored three times in each half, with Mark Griffiths netting a 74th minute consolation.

They were up against it after conceding a poor first goal to the unmarked Craig Whitfield, and were two down on 10 minutes when Mark Pritchard converted a penalty that also saw Elliot Jones harshly sent off for a professional foul. Dave Forbes made it 3-0 on 17 minutes, and Pritchard got his second six minutes into the second period.

Mark Winslade increased the margin with a free

kick and, despite a reply from Griffiths from a well worked move, the Ancients had the last word when Matt Hurdman on 75 minutes

Rock bottom Rhayader Town slumped 2-0 at home to Porthmadog, while Mold Alex went down by the same score against Denbigh Town.

Earlier in the week, late goals from Aaron Edwards and Dave Easthope earned Gullsfield an exciting 4-3 victory over Newtown in a friendly.

Saturday's fixtures

Huws Gray Cymru Alliance (2.30): Caerfearn Town v Flint Town Utd, Caersws v Buckley Town, Conwy Borough v Rhayader Town, Denbigh Town v Cefn Druids, Gresford Athletic v Gullsfield, Holycross Hotspur v Llanfair United, Holywell Town v Porthmadog, Mold Alex v Prestatyn Town.

Saints back on track with five-star show

FOOTBALL by John Bridgwater

HOLDERS The New Saints stayed firmly on course for back-to-back trebles after clinching their place in the final of the Welsh Cup with a five-star victory over Gap Connah's Quay at Newtown's Latham Park.

Two quick-fire goals midway through the first half from Scott Quigley and Matty Williams put the Saints on their way, before winger Jamie Mullan made it three at half-time.

Quigley scored his second after the break to effectively settle the semi-final tie, before completing his hat-trick and a man-of-the-match display with another composed finish.

The rampant Saints will now meet Airbus UK, who had earlier swept aside Port Talbot 7-0 in another one-sided semi-final, also at Newtown.

After a couple of setbacks, Saints manager Craig Harrison was delighted at the manner of the victory against potentially tricky opponents.

"It was a great performance, we started well and just got better and better," he said. "To score five goals in a semi-final is a terrific effort."

The last three games have not been ideal, but we got back to what we do best, playing free-flowing football at a high tempo, with good movement."

Victory took the Saints a step closer to a famous treble for the second season running, with the Oswestry side – who have already won the Word Cup – also in sight of a fifth successive league crown as well as the Welsh Cup.

Gap, chasing a third win over the full-timers this season, had started well enough as they forced the Saints to defend a couple of free-kicks.

But TNS were up for the challenge as they kept their opponents at bay with some assured passing and movement, along with some crisp tackling throughout the pitch.

The Nomads may have had cause for optimism early on, but that soon faded once the Saints struck twice in as many minutes midway through the first half.

The holders, looking to lift the cup for a third straight season, sounded a warning when Ryan Brobbel fired just wide while Chris Seagant curled a free-kick past the post moments later.

The breakthrough came on 22 minutes when Jamie Mullan's cross from the left floated over keeper John Danby, before Brobbel played the ball back at the far post for Quigley to fire in from close range.

And that advantage was doubled from their very next attack as Williams curled a delightful shot past the diving Danby. Nomads kept battling hard, with Les Davies heading just over, while the striker was denied by a smart save from keeper Paul Harrison.

But TNS made it 3-0 four minutes before half-time when Aeron Edwards slipped in Mullan and he raced into the box before neatly lifting the ball over Danby. The Nomads could have pulled one back on the stroke of half-time when Callum Morris saw his shot blocked on the line by team-mate Wes Baynes.

However, the tie was effectively all over once Quigley low past Danby to make it 4-0.

Saints' Connell Rawlinson had a header effort ruled out for a foul, but Connah's Quay were not to be spared in the 66th minute when Quigley completed his hat-trick in fine style.

The forward underlined his strength when he launched a powerful run into the box from the right and left three defenders in his wake before producing a composed finish to curl his 12-yard shot past Danby.

■ The New Saints Ladies stand on the brink of the West Midlands Premier division title after hammering Wrockwardine Wood 9-0 at Park Hall. With two games left, they need just one win to make sure of the crown after second placed Crusaders kept their hopes alive with 7-1 success against Walsall Ladies.

TNS Ladies reserves were 3-1 winners a Brereton Town Ladies in the Staffordshire League

Rangers target spot in FA Cup



Ellesmere Rangers' Joshua Brown goes on the attack in the 4-1 win over Black Country Rangers at Shrewsbury College while (below) is Louis Irvine being crowded out. Pics: Richard Dawson.



ELLESMERE RANGERS boss Richard Brown has set his team the target of securing a top four finish – and a guaranteed place in next year's FA Cup – over the final weeks of the campaign, writes STUART DUNN.

Rangers hit the road twice in the next few days for games against teams close to them in the table with Saturday's trip to Dudley Sports followed by an excursion to Wolverhampton Sporting Community next Tuesday night.

"I'm still aiming for a top four finish as that guarantees a place in the FA Cup," said Brown, whose team beat Black Country Crusaders 4-1 last weekend.

"That's where we finished last

season and to do it again given the upheaval we've had with injuries and the building work taking place at the ground which means we've not played at home for a while would be a great effort."

"The lads that have come into the team from the youth side have done well. Jack Orbell's come into the team for the last few games and for a lad who's just turned 17 and coming into an adult league, he's took it all very well."

Brown was pleased with his side's efforts in overcoming Black Country in a match played on the 3G pitch at Shrewsbury College with Beech Grove still unavailable.

But he admitted that, having

opened up a 4-0 lead, he was a little disappointed to see hopes of a clean sheet dashed by a late consolation goal from the visitors.

Josh Brown earlier scored twice while ex-Haughmond striker Adam Davies and former Shrewsbury Town youth teamer Charlie Musselwhite – back from Loughborough University for Easter – also netted.

"We're hoping to get five or six games out of Jack when he's back," added boss Brown. "It was a very good result for us and I was really happy with it, especially when you look at some of the results Black County have had recently like beating Gornal 4-0 the week before."

High fives as Banw maintain fine form

DYFFRYN Banw's season continues to pick up after maintaining their revival in the Spar Mid Wales League division two with a 5-0 home hammering of Presteigne.

After being dragged down into basement trouble, Banw are looking in good shape to edge back up the table as two goals from Aled Jones helped set up their latest win. Geraint Roberts and Dyffryn Jones also found the net, along with an own goal.

They have won three of their last four outings, with victory building on the 2-0 victory at Four Crosses the week and the 2-1 win at Bont.

At the other end of the table, leaders **BERRIEW** surged 10 points clear with six games left to play after inflicting a 7-0 drubbing on hosts Bont.

Will Gittins, Rob Pritchard and Rich Davies all scored twice, with Steff Rogers getting the other to put the title firmly in their side's grasp.

A few days before, the free-scoring Rhiewsiders enhanced their push for the title with an 8-0 demolition of lowly Penybont.

Chris Carroll led the charge with a hat-trick along with further goals from Karl Selaerts, Barry Bellis, Ross Harris, Craig Pearce and Steffan Rogers.

Elsewhere in division two, Abermule slumped 4-0 at promotion outsiders Radnor Valley, Bettws were 2-1 winners at Penybont and Newbridge notched a 3-1 success at home to Buith Wells.

In division one, struggling **MONTGOMERY** picked up only their second win of the season with a 3-2 home verdict against Powys neighbours **WELSHPOOL**.

Although heading towards relegation, it was a timely boost for Monty who remain adrift at the foot of the table.

LLANRHAEDADR, chasing a top four finish, were left kicking their heels as their home clash with Aberaeron was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Title chasers Penrhyncoch suffered more frustration with the wet weather as their encounter away to third placed Carno also fell victim to a drenched surface.

That meant that Knighton Town opened up a 10-point lead at the top after their 2-0 home success against **WATERLOO ROVERS**.

Hay St Mary's are looking good for a top five finish after overcoming visiting Bow Street 3-1, while Llanidloes Town paid the price for a poor first half as they slumped 3-0 at Llandrindod Wells.

Town washed out twice and will try again

THERE was more frustration with the weather for FC Oswestry Town whose Shropshire Challenge Cup semi-final with Childs Ercall at Shrewsbury Sports Village was called off due to a waterlogged pitch.

The tie will now be played next Tuesday, with the winners to progress to the final at The New Meadow, home of Shrewsbury Town.

The weather also halted FC Oswestry Town's title charge as their Mercian Regional League premier division clash away to Broseley was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Meanwhile, holders FC Oswestry were due to be in action last night (wed) in the final of the Commander Ethelston Cup against Malpas at Yockings Park, Whitchurch.

■ Morda United's hopes of bouncing back from their Village Cup final defeat at Llansantffraid were dashed when their home Montgomeryshire League cup quarter final tie against Llanfair United reserves was postponed with the Weston Road pitch waterlogged.

The Weston Road side are scheduled to entertain Caersws Reserves in the Montgomeryshire League first division on Saturday, (kick-off 2:30pm), though it is possible that last weekend's postponed cup match could take precedence.

Ifton get flyer with win over new boys

ITFTON made the perfect start to the Shropshire Premier Bowls League with a 14-0 whitewash against Hanwood on the opening night.

After narrowly missing out on runners-up spot last season, the St Martins side sounded an early warning they will again be one of the teams to watch with a resounding 118 shots (252-134) success.

Having lost just one match at home last term, there was little chance they would slip up, this time against their Shrewsbury visitors.

Carl Roberts, back at the club full time this season, marked his return with a most valuable player honour after sweeping aside Ashley Wellings 21-8.

Nicky Jones, Keiron Roberts and Dave 'Rocky' Jones, the latter also back full time with the club this season, were other winners to eight, while Martin Jones notched the biggest win of the night when seeing off Mark Shore to seven.

Darren Lacey prevailed to nine, Dave Bond to 10 and Leighton Roberts to 11 in a terrific team display.

Completing the whitewash were Geraint Williams (21-12) Andrew Hughes (21-15) and Craig Griffiths (21-18), while the closest match of the night saw Ian Metcalfe edge out Phil Little 21-20.

Buoyed by the terrific win, Ifton - who are already three points clear at the top - will be out to keep up the good work on Friday night when they head to Hadley USC who themselves made an encouraging start with an 8-6 (seven shots) win at Wem USC.

Shrewsbury clubs CASTLEFIELDS and MEOLE BRACE, not in action on the opening night, launch their campaigns tomorrow evening.

Meole host Sir John Bayley while Castlefields, boosted by the return of Mike Beer from a year out, welcome WEM USC to Queen Street.

Wem suffered a narrow defeat last Friday as they were edged out by seven chalks on aggregate in being pipped 8-6 at home by Hadley USC, despite solid home wins for Mike Dulson 21-11 and Colin Smith 21-13.

CHESTER ROAD, who finished in the bottom three last year, also began with a home setback as they went down 10-4 (agg 25) to St Georges in Whitchurch.

Golf returns from around the county

ARSCOTT

Bogey Competition Division 1 Overall winner: J Larkham 1 Up, Division 1 Runner Up: T Corfield - All Square, Division 2 Overall winner: C Mitchell & P. Univ. Division 2 Runner Up: A Connor 2 Up.

Juniors' 3 Clubs and a Putter Competition: A Stuart 39pts; L Parker 37pts (c/b); M Starling 37pts (c/b); T Marr 35pts (c/b).

HAWKSTONE PARK

Men's Easter Medal Division 1: M Harrington 81-11c=70; A Porter 74-3c-71; C Young 84-7c-77. **Division 2:** C J Smith 98-26c=72; P Moorcroft 91-16c=75; P Hollins 98-20c=78.

Men's Easter: D Edwards 81-1c=69; T Jones 78-4c=69; S Maclean 81-6c=75.

Men's Budget Trophy Easter Medal & Cup Combined (36 Holes): S Mills 80+69=149; T Jones 77+74=151; A Porter 71+80=151.

Ladies' Grace Easter Cup: M Hughes 103 - 27 - net 76; V Jones-Roberts 88 - 9 - net 79; G Chesters 97 - net 82.

Men's Easter Texas Scramble: P Ellis; P Moorcroft, D Main & G Soul 65 Gross 57.7 Nett; S Saunders, D Wright, D Clark & P Harris 65 Gross, 58.3 Nett; D Roberts, B Young, D Brierley & C Brown 67 Gross, 58.5 Nett; D Hiles, K Kapur, Seniors Captain & P Bichener 66 Gross, 59.6 Nett.

Juniors' MarchMedal: T Bachie 30pts; M Moore 29pts.

OSWESTRY

Ladies' Draw For Partners Stableford (18 Holes): M Male, S Weaver, A Barker 108pts; E Gwilt, G Woolham, A Colquhoun 101pts; C Pearce, M Shakeshaft, D Hall 100pts; A Davies, M Landrege, M Brogden 97pts.

(9 Holes): J Williams, P Weston, M Evans 48pts (c/b); J Edwards, A Brock, B Bebbington 48pts (c/b).

SHREWSBURY

Ladies' 18 Hole Medal Division 1: J Breeze 74; S Pritchard 76; L Hardling 77. **Division 2:** M Saul 78; P Turner 84; A Jones 87. **Division 3:** P Morgan 88; T Robinson 92.

Glyn Hill Cup Winner: J Breeze.

9 Hole Qualifying Competition: M Sherratt 16pts; R Malcolm 16pts; M Roberts 14pts.

THE BROW

Easter Singles Winner: T Williams 36pts (c/b); K Fairbank 36; P Shore 35; J Youens 33 (c/b);

New polo academy finds a local home

IT is known as the sport of the elite, played by rich businessmen to members of the Royal family.

But now the sport of polo has found a new home in Shropshire, thanks to a couple who say they want it to be enjoyed by everyone. Bob Broster and his wife Delina have played the sport all their lives, travelling across the world for competitions.

When they moved to the region they wanted to bring polo with them but found it difficult to seek out the land they needed in the rolling hills of the Shropshire border. Now the couple have found the ideal venue for their Mid Wales and Shropshire Polo Academy in the Radfords Equestrian Centre at Llanymynech near Oswestry.

A special open day will be held next month. The event, on April 23, will include demonstrations.

"We will even have a bucking bronco for aspiring riders to have a go on," Mrs Broster said.

She said the couple had been involved in horses and in polo all their lives.

Mrs Broster said: "Bob has been a professional player much of his life as well as a farrier. We have been all over the world including New Zealand. He even had his own jousting team."

The couple moved to Castle Caereinion but were unable to find land flat enough for a polo field until they joined forces with the equestrian centre in Llanymynech.

"There is a great indoor school where we can teach the basics of polo, safely, in a controlled environment," Mrs Broster said. "Novices will sit on our specially made wooden horses to learn how to hold a mallet and understand the rules before progressing onto one of our own polo ponies."

"Polo is known as an elite sport but we want to make it more accessible to everyone. People have to be able to ride of course but they don't have to have their own horse. Polo ponies are specially bred and trained for the sport and so anyone joining the academy would use our ponies."

"We would also welcome people who have played polo in the past."

Super win eases the COBRA drop worries

RUGBY by John Bridgwater

COBRA took a massive step towards survival in rugby's Swalec Welsh League division one (north) after pulling off a terrific 26-3 win at home to third placed Bala.

The Meifod side were in unstoppable form as they bagged four tries in a bonus point victory, and are now 15 points clear of second bottom Dolgellau whose home clash with Pwllheli was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Although their basement rivals have four games in hand, COBRA would far prefer to have the points on the board as they prepare for a clash away to rock bottom Llangefni on Saturday - their last away game of the season.

With three games remaining, one more win should be enough to guarantee survival.

They can take heart from the manner of victory against an in-form Bala side who, despite looking strong in the scrums, often found themselves on the back foot as the hosts enjoyed more favourable running conditions.

They ran in three tries in the first half, and had chances to have added more, as the forwards produced an outstanding display to set up clean, fast ball.

Conversion

The Llanfair Caereinion men were ahead early on when a ball was kicked upfield, winger Sion Wyn Williams gathered before releasing outside centre Harry Jukes to cross the line.

Jukes, who took over the kicking duties with fly half Llew Williams injured, also added the conversion for a 7-0 lead.

Bala reduced the arrears with a penalty, but COBRA were looking sharp, and added a second touchdown with a cracking effort from a defensive position on their own 22.

The ball was passed out from the scrum, Jukes made a break before releasing the lively Wyn Williams who, despite 60 yards out, sped past the covering defence to touch down, with Jukes converting.

Harry Jukes then went over for his second try before half time when put clear by Wyn Williams following another good break down the right with good interplay between backs and forwards, the conversion being missed.

The bonus point was wrapped up early in the second half when a rehearsed move from a



No8 Jack Jukes crashes over for COBRA's fourth try in their fine 26-3 victory over Bala, with flanker Aled Humphreys in support. Picture: Trevor Jones.

line-out on the visitors 22 saw No8 Jack Jukes break through a couple of tackles to score, with Harry Jukes converting.

Although Bala enjoyed their best spell of the game, COBRA never looked likely to relinquish their grip, despite having second row forward Rhodri Evans yellow carded following a string of infringements.

COBRA's youngsters, meanwhile, put up a determined effort before losing 21-9 to champions Bangor in the North Wales Youth League division two.

There was frustration for WELSHPOOL whose home clash with Porthmadog in division three (north) was postponed as their visitors were unable to raise a side.

Try-crazy Eagles keep titles hopes alive

RUGBY by John Bridgwater

TRY-HAPPY Oswestry racked up a resounding 79-5 victory over Isle of Man side Ramsey at Granville Park to keep alive their title chances in rugby's Cheshire South.

It was the perfect response after a late penalty sentenced second placed Eagles to a hard-fought 23-22 loss at Moore in their last action two weeks ago. Despite the landslide victory, they remain poised closer to the league title courtesy of a 57-20 home success against Eagles.

With just three games remaining, the Medics are firm favourites to land the crown, but the Os men are looking good for runners-up as they are eight points ahead of their nearest rivals.

Already assured of promotion, the Eagles will look to keep up the pressure at the top when they head to another Isle of Man side, Vagabonds, on Saturday.

Remarkably, they found themselves trailing 5-3 against Ramsey when the visiting centre blasted through to score the first try of the game with 10 minutes on the clock.

But the Eagles soon picked up the pace on a sticky pitch, and were in front when man-of-the-match

Ivor Hughes easily outpaced his opposite winger to score in the corner - the first of 12 tries for the rampant home side.

Impressive fullback Luca Owen Youens always looked dangerous and he bounced off two tackles to score the next try, before stalwart clubman Chris Heskey smuggled the ball over the line to take the bonus point for the 20 mark.

Aussie centre Aiden Gruenole then showed superb skill from quick ruck ball, seeing the space and sidestepping through the Vagabonds to give the home side a 25-5 half-time lead and already a bonus point for four tries.

Gaz Hughes was keen to get on the scoresheet, and his determined running saw him outpacing the visiting defence to notch up another score soon after the interval.

Ramsey looked like they wanted to be back on the flight home to the Isle of Man as they were now trotting from behind the posts to the halfway line on a regular basis.

Giant full-back Youen Owens proved a handful

with his constant running, causing mayhem time and again. The tries flowed with winger James Anderson next to scour the line after being the recipient of a lovely exchange of passes.

Colt Dan Morgan then came on as a replacement and scored with his first touch of the ball after another flowing move.

Ivor Hughes then thought he was back to his foot-ball days with Ellesmere Rangers when he dribbled a loose ball over the line from 40 metres out to score the next touchdown.

Oswestry's international flavour came to the fore when after English, Welsh and Australian players had all scored tries, New Zealand scrum half Hamish Fuller got in on the act when touching down after a deft kick through by Fin Grogan.

The match was still not finished but Ramsey were out for the count, with Luke Hassell and Anderson completing the scoring.

As well as 12 tries for the Eagles, fly half Grogan finished with 19 points with the boot.

OSWESTRY II, without any action in the North West League division four (south), look for their fourth win in a row when they entertain Bowdon Thirds on Saturday.

A cracking Easter for TNS young footballers

TNS Academy's young guns fired their way to a haul of silverware after making a successful foray into the Manchester Easter Cup.

The under-nines lifted the cup in their age group, comfortably winning the final with a terrific team display.

Not to be outdone, the under-15s won their tournament, prevailing in the semi final against Barmouth on penalties after the game had finished 3-3 following extra time. They went on to defeat the Isle of Man School of Excellence 3-1 in the final.

The under-sevens won their group, then narrowly lost the semi-final before winning the third and fourth place play off.

Despite missing out on a trophy, the under-eights competed superbly, playing some great football in their age group.

The under-10s entered two teams, and they both met in the challenge cup play-off final.

The game ended 2-2 and instead of going into extra time, it was decided a share of the spoils was the best way to end the tournament, with both teams receiving winners medals and sharing the trophy.

The under-11s played very well, winning their group before losing in the semi-finals against WallSEND Boys FC, who in the past have produced players like Alan Shearer and Michael Carrick.

The under-12s took their semi-final on penalties before winning the final thanks to a late spot kick from striker TJ Burns.

The under-13s narrowly missed out on winners medals, losing the play-off round robin by just one goal difference.

The under-16s played very well in comfortably winning the challenge final, while the under-14s found themselves in a difficult group, and their play-off final was called off midway through the first half due to horrendous weather.

"Congratulations to all The New Saints Academy age groups taking part in the Manchester Easter Cup," said lead foundation phase coach Jason Brindley.

"It was really good to get all age groups competing at the same festival, especially our under-sevens who are at the beginning of their football development."

"To have brought home as many trophies shows the strength of the academy and the calibre of players we are developing."

Tigers earn stripes with a top display

CAEREINION'S reign at the top of the C Dyke Oswestry table Tennis League for the past four years came to an end as Morda Tigers ensured that they took top spot with a draw against club counterparts Morda A to finish the season unbeaten.

Club mates Morda A made it difficult for the champions with Ian Clarke in superb form by winning all his singles.

However, the Tigers, composed of captain Jason Hughes, Jeremy Chavez and Glyn Jones, did enough to earn a draw and thus secure the title for the first time in their history. Runners-up spot went to the experienced trio of Morda Exiles of Brian Suckley, Alun Jones and Andy Hardy.

Last year's champions Caereinion had to settle for third spot although one of their players, Wyn Williams, won the individual merit for the most wins with 44 wins from 45 - only losing out to Morda A's Allen Roberts in the very last match of the season.

The second division honours went to the youngsters of Criftin's B of Jack Hughes and Ollie Harris who are looking forward to playing their table tennis in the first division next season.

Runners-up spot in the second division went to the Ex-Servicemen's of Oswestry who only lost one match all season. The individual merit for division two went to Jack Hughes and Julian Walford respectively.

Sport

OSWESTRY SPORTS DESK 01743 283301

Rugby
COBRA cruise to
vital victory – P39

Football
Ellesmere target
FA Cup spot – P38



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Gulls climb after double win bonus

GUILSFIELD moved up to fourth in the Cymru Alliance after making it back-to-back home wins with a convincing 4-0 victory over Buckley Town.

Newcomer Dave Easthope continued his fine scoring form for the villagers when netting for the third league game in a row to seal the midweek success.

Aaron Edwards, Andy Ford and Adam Jenkins were also on target for the Gulls who will be out to continue the winning run away to Gresford Athletic on Saturday.

Manager Danny Barton hopes the Gulls can stay on course for a high finish in the Alliance after returning to winning ways with a 3-1 verdict against Flint Town United at the weekend thanks to three late goals.

"We've got a few of the top teams to play, and we are looking to finish as high as we can and also end the season with some silverware," he said.

Guilfild will take on Berriew or Llanrhedyn in the semi-final of the Central Wales Cup, the tie to be played at a neutral venue. In the other semi-final Hay St Marys, Cardigan Town or Kerry have been drawn against Carno or Abergavon.

Llanfair United head to Anglesey on Saturday to take on Holyhead Hotspur. Rhys Stephens' side were frustrated by the weather again last weekend when their home clash with basement rivals Conwy Borough was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch at the Mount Field. They still remain two points outside the three relegation places after Mold Alex, Caersws and Rhayader Town all lost.

Former Newcastle and Southampton player John Beresford will be special guest at Guilsfield's annual sporting lunch at the Community Centre.

This year's guest at the lunch on Sunday, April 17 will be accompanied by MC, Willie Miller, and top comedian Rod Woodward. There will also be a range of sporting goods for auction including a signed Wales shirt, a golfing day, pamper days plus a host of other items. Tickets cost £35 each, or a table of 10 can be booked.

Berriew ease into the cup semi-finals

HIGH-FLIERS Berriew are on the trail of silverware this season after booking their place in the semi-final of the ER Jenkins Cup with a 3-0 passage against Borth.

Karl Seliarts, Will Gittins and Steff Rogers were all on target for the Spar Mid Wales League division two leaders to set up a last-four meeting away to Abermule on Saturday.

There are four fixtures in the Spar Mid Wales League division one this weekend, with Llanrhedyn keen to get back on the pitch as they push for a top-four finish at home to Llandrindod Wells.

Struggling Montgomery, buoyed by only their second league win of the campaign when defeating Welshpool last week, look for more of the same at home to Abergavon while Waterloo Rovers face a tricky trip to Carno.

Meanwhile, Welshpool Town duo, striker Will Thomas and midfielder Ian Probert, have joined Cymru Alliance strugglers Caersws.

TITLE IS IN OUR HANDS – BOSS

BOSS Craig Harrison is backing The New Saints to finish the job as they target a fifth successive Welsh Premier title in Saturday's top-of-the-table tussle with Bala Town.

With three games remaining, victory at Park Hall would secure the crown and complete the second stage of a possible back-to-back treble for the defending champions.

The Saints won't be underestimating their second-placed visitors – the teams have played out three draws this season.

But Harrison is confident his men have what it takes to deliver more silverware after seeing the league leaders hammer gap Connah's Quay 5-0 last Saturday to reach a third successive Welsh Cup final.

With Bala arriving at Park Hall for Saturday's 5.15pm kick-off five points behind, victory for TNS would clinch the 10th title in their history.

Despite having some margin for error, Harrison will be looking to complete the job this weekend. "It's in our own hands, and you can't ask for any more than that," he said.

"If someone had said at the start of the season that we'd have three games left to win the league, starting with a home game, then we would have snatched that.

Confidence

"It's going to be tough against Bala. Colin Caton is a good manager; he has some good players, some solid pros and they have done consistently well for the last few seasons.

"But we can go into the game full of confidence after last weekend. I wanted the players to respond after a couple of defeats – and what a response. We now need to take that performance into Saturday's game. Our players love these games and the challenges they bring."

Saturday's encounter will be televised live by S4C – but last weekend's hat-trick hero Scott Quigley is a doubt after going off late in the semi-final with a calf strain. He has not trained this week and will be assessed closer to the game.

"He's 50-50, we'll wait to see how he is," said Harrison. "We've got options, but it would be disappointing for Scott after scoring a hat-trick.

"He has had to wait for his opportunities in the side, but he's got power and pace, and again showed he's one for the future."

Harrison's side made light of back-to-back defeats with a five-star showing against Connah's Quay. "Since I have been manager in four and a half years at the club, I have never lost two in a row so it was going to be a test for us," he said.

"The players have been fantastic. It was a great performance, we started well and just got better and better. We got back to what we do best, playing free-flowing football at a high tempo."

In the final, Harrison will now tackle his old club, Airbus UK and come face to face again with his close pal Andy Thomas, who is No.2 at the Wingmakers.

The match will be staged on Monday, May 2, with a 4.30pm kick-off at a venue to be confirmed.

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Ruthless Os still in with title chance

AFTER racking up a dozen tries, Oswestry will look to continue their ruthless streak when they take on Isle of Man opposition for the second week running on Saturday.

The Eagles were in full flight as they hammered Ramsey 79-5 at home last weekend to keep up the title pressure on leaders Manchester Medics in rugby's Cheshire South.

Now they take to the skies on Saturday as they head across the water to another Manx outfit, Vagabonds, looking for a win that would keep them on course for at least runners-up spot while closing the gap on the pacemakers.

With just three games remaining the Medics remain firm favourites, but the Os men are looking good for second spot. They are eight points ahead of their nearest rivals.

They will reflect that the only difference between the sides is bonus points, which could prove decisive come the end of the season.

Already assured of promotion, the Eagles found themselves trailing 5-3 against Ramsey last weekend, before storming back with a dozen touchdowns.

Across the border, COBRA look to effectively seal safety in the Swalec Welsh League division one (north) when they head to base stadium side Llangefni on Saturday.

The Meifod side make the trip to Anglesey in good heart after producing their best display of the season in overcoming Bala 26-3 in a terrific bonus-point win.

However, they have to make changes as skipper and scrum-half Iwan Vaughan is unavailable, while fly-half Llew Williams and hooker Steve Isaac are injured.

WELSHPOOL, whose clash at home to Porthmadog was postponed as their visitors could not field a team, face a tough clash at home to title-chasing Llangollen in division three (north).

It's green for go as new season starts

BOWLERS are ready to roll again when the Oswestry and District League launches another season next Tuesday.

Weston Rhyn, back in division one this term, start with a trip to Chirk A as they look to cement their place in the top flight.

Whittington A, who had a mixed campaign last year, start at home to Overton A while Church A, who finished mid-table, welcome Ruabon A. Criftins A, who came fifth last year, are also on home soil against Ceiriog Valley.

In division two, newly-promoted Whittington B are on the road at Cynwyd A, while Llanymynech A head to Ye Olde Crofte A.

Tuesday fixtures – Division one: Johnstown A v Johnstown B, Church A v Ruabon A, Criftins A v Ceiriog Valley A, Chirk A v Weston Rhyn A, Whittington A v Overton A, Corwen A v Llangollen A.

Division two: Bersham v Llangynog A, Flexsys A v Church B, Llanrhedyn A v Ellesmere B, Ye Olde Crofte A v Llanymynech A, Cynwyd A v Whittington B.

Wednesday – Division two: Criftins C v Criftins B.